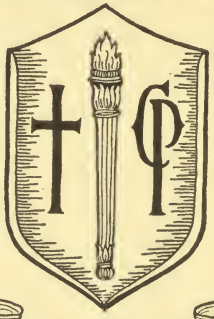
PARERGA

A COMPANION VOLUME TO
'UNDER THE CEDARS AND THE STARS'

CANON SHEEHAN

COLLEGE
OF THE PACIFIC



GIFT OF
Mrs. Paul Curtis

PARERGA

College of the Pacific
Stockton Calif.

PARERGA:

A COMPANION VOLUME

TO

UNDER THE CEDARS AND THE STARS

BY
Patrick Augustine
CANON SHEEHAN, D.D.
Author of "My New Curate," "Luke Delmege"
"Glenanaar," etc.

LONGMANS, GREEN, AND CO.
39 PATERNOSTER ROW, LONDON
NEW YORK, BOMBAY, AND CALCUTTA
1912

College of the Pacific
Stockton, Calif.

Copyright, 1908, by
Longmans, Green, and Co.

All Rights Reserved

First Edition, February, 1908
Reprinted, September, 1910
Reprinted, May, 1912

Mrs. Paul Curtis

APR 3 1945
PR
5377
S5

THE UNIVERSITY PRESS, CAMBRIDGE, U.S.A

CONTENTS

PART I. AUTUMN

Section I. (i-xxxi) 3

Signs and Tokens — The Grey Friar — A Spring Scene — A Holiday — Unchanged Nature — Reveries — The Rapture of the Sea — In Vain — Once More — At Eventide — Aurora — Sea-Fogs — Minute-Guns — The Fall of the Leaf — Phantoms — The Magic of Sleep — A Returned Exile — Death the Hope-Giver — Death Conquered — Death the Eternal Law — "Why are ye Fearful?" — An Impartial but Unreasonable Thing — A Personal Diagnosis — A Secret Science — Other Sciences — Theology a Commonage — The Great Rebellion — An Unscientific Departure — Theology a Science — No Mystery in Medicine — *Ultra Crepidam.*

Section II. (xxxii-lxxiii) 29

The Great Mystery — The Inevitable — No Progress without Pain — Pain the Agent of Civilisation — Grades of Spirits — Inhabited Planets — The Altruism of Nature — Pain a Revelation — Sentence of Death — "Thy Will be Done!" — Winds and Rains — Welcome, Boreas! — The Storm-Rapture — The Drama of the Storm — Autumnal Rains — The Autumn of Life — Autumnal Acquaintances — A Great Success — But a Mediocrity — A Paradise and a Ruin — *Guarda e Passa* — A Philosopher — Another Type — Early Education — Disillusion — Education and Experience — Justice Blind — A Fagin University — A Lurid Sunset — Cirrhi and Cumuli — An Evening-Star — My Doppel-Ganger! — An Apology for Anger — *Res Caducae* — Mocking the Eternal — Infinite Pity — A Distinction — A Good Shepherd — The Miracle of Adaptation — Evil the Root of Good — Two Books — A Gleam of Hope.

Section III. (lxxiv-ciii) 66

The Orient — The Spirit of Curiosity — Symbols — A Vicious Circle — Romanticism — Wanted, a Grand Vizier — A Learned Candidate — A Progressionist — Haroun Disguised — A Fakir — Three Questions — Closing in — Impressions of Death — Pierre Loti — Disinterment of Williams — Shelley's Cremation — Grey Skies — Silence of Winter — Street Noises — Creameries — City Noises — World-Problems — Their Solution — *The Lady of Shalott* — The Poets' Mirror — Poets and Society — Carlyle — Hawthorne — Winter — *O Altitudo.*

PART II. WINTER

Section I. (i-xxx) 97

The Narrowing of Winter — Lu and Ju — War Proclaimed — The Higher Humanity — An Ally — A Machiavel — Remorse — An Academic Speech — The Crisis over — Science and Death — Irish Turf or African Veldt — *Ruhe Sanft* — The Souls of Flowers — A Holy Riddle — A Mimosa — Guillotined — A Meteoric Shower — A Great Line — Contrasts — Shakspeare and the Sea — The Love of the Sea — A Modern Passion — Men and Books — A Student's Library — Counsels — Clean Books — New Parcels — Illustrations — Bindings — *Ci siamo!*

Section II. (xxxi-lviii) 125

Shakspeare and Germany — Celts and Shakspeare — Great Lines — Shakspeare and the Stage — His Coarseness — Too Human — Heine on Shakspeare — No Abstractions in Shakspeare — Character Painting — Not a Creator — Shakspeare-Bacon Controversy — English Opinion — Lord Houghton — An Eclectic — The Drama Omnipotent — *Jeu de Mots* — Judge Webb's Opinion — A Cambridge M. A. — The Accent of Universities — A Dialogue — A Descent — Seneca and Shakspeare — Shakspeare and Jean Paul — Souls and Stars — Richter not Read Now — *Faust* and Freemasonry — Three Religions — Humanism.

Section III. (lix-xc) 153

The Sense of Ridicule — The Angels' Laughter — The Puppet Show — Goethe — Schiller — The Home of Mysticism — The Home of Science — The Need of the Age

— A Significant Group — The *Trivium* of Herbart — Instruction *versus* Development — A Triptych — First Picture — Second Picture — Third Picture — Equality — Education — Discipline — *Eheu, Fugaces!* — The Rapids — Work — The Loom of Time — A Watch and a Vision — Christmas Eve — Midnight — The Constellations — The Angels at Bethlehem — Child and Mother — Days Lengthening — A Kleptomaniac — A Socialist — Compromise.

PART III. SPRING

Section I. (i-xxvii) 187

A Glimpse of Spring — Spenser — A Poet's Grave — A Martyrology — Verdaguer — Herder — A Colossal Work — Not Popular — A Great Thought — Swinburne — The Verdict — *Atalanta in Calydon* — Servile Imitation — Death with Dignity — A Child-Poem — No Message — But of Paphos — Aloof — No Hero-Worship — Swinburne's Prose — Too Emphatic — *Tantaene Irae?* — Loch Torridon — Another View — Criticism Run Mad — A Selection — Redeeming Lines.

Section II. (xxviii-lix) 212

Goethe's *Symbolum* — Carlyle — Early Heroic Days — An Epic's Close — A Last Scene — The Prophet's Place — His Letters — His Fickleness — A Worshipper — His Ambition — His Hopes — Degenerate — Two Trials — And Temptations — Law is Law — The Chariots of Life — Charioteers — A Fine Expression — "The Pendulum of Eternity" — A Cataclysm — The Indifference of the Universe — Stars and Graves — Contrasts of Life — A Defeat — Waste in Nature — Nature Silent — A Peep of Spring — Boreas Defied — Athletes — A Tournament — Discipline — A Disappointed Man.

Section III. (lx-lxxxvii) 239

Associations — Waifs — Spring Idylls — Seed-Time — Grace and Gentleness — Man and Nature — Spinoza — Poets and Nature — Tennyson — A Great Lyric — Transformations — "The Wild Freshness of Morning" — Recollections — Sentiment — An Artist First — Winged Thoughts — Taine on Tennyson — Tennyson's Colouring — Not Sublime — Art and Artlessness — Wordsworth's Bathos — Word-Painting — Originality — Parallels not Plagiarism — Adaptations — His Mind Progress — Juvenilia — Drifting.

PART IV. SUMMER

Section I. (i-xxx) 265

The Geocentric Theory — "Ye Shall be as Gods!" — Clothes Philosophy — Life — Not Seraphs — Life a Compromise — No Perfection — Climatic Influences — Sunny Thoughts — Mother Nature — Colossi — Their Majesty — Painting and Song — Great Sayings — Their Tenderness — And Infinite Pity — M. Angelo's Generosity — Platonic Love — Beatrice — Other Heroines — Decadent Italy — Her Modern Poets — Carducci — A Degenerate Age — Goethe, Coryphæus — A Portentous Renascence — The Hymn to Satan — Lawlessness — Science and Law — And Despair.

Section II. (xxxi-lxiii) 289

Jewish Laws — Purity before Learning — An Index — Present Poetry — The Second Law — Ceaseless Work — Harvest Labourers — Nemesis — "The Man with the Hoe" — Idleness — Some Great Ideal — Epitaphs — A Fall — A Lost Art — Parliament — Business Men — The Gallery — The House of Lords — Disillusion — An Unpleasant Trick — A Riddle — Dalmeny Park — Is it Patriotism? — Be not too Bold! — In the Depths — A Mammoth — Halls of Eblis — Cave Treasures — A Bear's Incisor — Prehistoric — Summer Flowers — "All Shall Go!" — Unbelievers.

Section III. (lxiv-ci) 316

A Stampede — A Circus to a Boy! — The Procession — Fairyland — Childhood — A Rare Talent — The Child, the Enigma — Other Eyes than ours — Early Prejudices — The Wisdom of Experience — The Insane — Delusions — An Example — Chained in a Cellar — Only a Little Longer — "To Let" — Ridiculed — A Fragment of Eden — "What a Paradise!" — Memory — Despondency — Loneliness — Alone! — Winter Closes in — A Crisis — Back again — A Dramatic Entry — A Reverie — And then? — The Secret of Happiness — Browning on Wordsworth — A World-Soul — The *Erd-Geist* of Goethe — Plagiarism — Naturalism — Heine on Goethe — Vanished — A Garden Dialogue.

Part I

AUTUMN

PARERGA

Part I

AUTUMN

Section I

I

Again the silent, sombre, melancholy autumn days have come round; and gently, almost imperceptibly, the mighty Mother is preparing to disrobe all her children for the sleep of the coming Winter.

Signs and Tokens.

I dearly love those gentle autumn days, almost more than those of any other season. The grey lights, the hushed colours, the slow and solemn changes in leaf and fruit and tree and flower; the clouds drifting before the south wind to-day — to-morrow poised in vast, cirrhous masses with sunlit skies between them; the cries of Nature — of lonely herons, beating up with heavy wings and long, spiderlike legs from river or fen, and uttering now and again a hoarse alarm-cry; the shrieking of the swallows in the evening, as they gather far up in the sky and plan all their little arrangements for the coming migration; the boom of the threshing-machine, caught high and low on the passing wind; the shrill cry of some singing bird, who has lost the glorious gift of song, with which he thrilled all nature in the gladsome Springtime, — all speak of the general winding-up of the pageant and pride of the season; and the contraction and closing-in

of the majestic forces that broke out in such lavish splendour during the Spring and Summer of the year.

II

The Grey Friar.

Yes! The garish lights and the jocund music are gone; the laughing children, who tossed the daisies and wove the cowslips of Spring, and the maidens who crowned themselves with the roses of Summer are gone; and the cowled and grey-habited, but gentle friar, Autumn, has just come out from the sidewings on to the stage. I have chosen that simile because I like monks. I like their dress, so flowing, so graceful and majestic; I like the falling scapular: I like the folded hands; I like the placid face, unfurrowed by care and undisturbed by passion; I like the solemn eyes that seem to regard us "from Eternity's stillness"; I like the hood that frames the placid face. And so, too, I like this grey monk, Autumn, that comes to us so quietly, so solemnly, without noise or laughter, except the soughing of gentle winds through the changing foliage of the trees, or such sounds as I have already described, and which seem to be quite in unison with the decay and demise of the year.

III

Spring Scene.

Not that I complain of Spring or Summer! Oh, no! I have such vivid recollections of the first daisy, or the first violet, of the snowdrop and lily-of-the-valley, that I should be ungrateful to make odious preferences

and comparisons. Mother Nature has never in her vast repositories anything more gracious or beautiful to show than when she hangs out her pink-and-white apple blossoms in the month of May, and, like trees and shrubs in a stereoscope, makes them stand forth with clear distinctness, each in its own place, till the whole garden seems snowed over with those frail and delicate flower-wafers; and the background is an unlimited vista of blossom till it breaks against the ranker foliage of the forest trees. And, when you add music to colour, and hear from the thick recesses of massed and fragrant bloom, or from the heart of a lilac-tree with its beautiful hyacinthine blossoms, or from beneath the drooping gold of the laburnum, the fluted melody of thrush or ousel, you think that there can be but one step from this to Paradise, and that one need not be surprised if he saw the angels walking hand-in-hand along the fragrant avenue, or standing, in tranced worship, beneath the trees of Eden.

IV

A Holiday.

And I have pleasant memories, too, of a short holiday which I took this Summer. I had not been to this seaside village for thirty-five years — since my student days; but I carried always with me the recollection of its one street, wind-swept and sloping down to where abruptly rose, or seemed to rise from the sea, a naked island; and just beyond, the white walls of the lighthouse. And I remembered, also, the windy mornings when we went forth to bathe, across the cliffs and down a dangerous winding path, to where in a sheltered bay enormous boulders lay prone, to

be lashed and washed by the huge waves that came rolling in from the deep sea-spaces. And I remembered the little trickling fountain half way down the cliff, where a tiny runlet started from the sandstone rock and fell into a natural basin; and how cool and sweet it tasted to lips half-parched by the bitter and brackish waves. And there was one sheltered spot, where the flat face of a rock fronted the sea, and formed a kind of natural seat or lounge, where in my adolescence I read, and read, and read the livelong day; and even hoped for rain and tempestuous weather that I might have the sea-cliffs and the sea all alone to myself.

V

Unchanged Nature.

And now I found all unchanged, *except myself*. There was the same cliff, the same chasm, the same boulders and rocks. The little fountain of sweet water sprang, as of old, from the sandstone, and was gathered into the hollow basin. A few feet of earth and shingle at the top of the cliff had fallen down; and a new path had been made. And that was all. For there, too, was my old seat beneath the rock; and to all appearance the same fragrant and perfumed purple heather, the same wild hemlock, with the little black star in the centre of the white disc; the same yellow broom, that since has yielded me that most safe of all heart-tonics — sparteine. And was I changed? Well, somewhat. I did not look at life with such tranquil and hopeful eyes as when I was a boy, hiding away from human observation there. But, I remember, the same poems pleased me then that please me to-day; and the same ques-

tions came up from the sea, and tortured me with their delightful iteration and persistence, — the same questions about life, and nature, and death, and immortality, to which I have found no answer as yet, except, of course, the emphatic and unwavering responses of Faith.

VI

Reveries.

I am not sure that the habit of day-dreaming, or reveries, is at all wholesome. But, like all opiates, it is very sweet and very tyrannical. At least I know that three or four of the morning hours after breakfast used to pass away almost unconsciously there in my smooth bed of heather beneath the rock. A little reading, a little observation, a little meditation on what I had read, and then — dream-pictures, such as seem to come in sleep, only that they never were grotesque or uncouth, or frightful — only shadows passing on and over the glistening surface of the sea as it slept beneath the warm rays of a midsummer sun. Then, suddenly, the mild face and wondering eyes of a sheep nibbling near me, or the shrill call of the young sea-gulls, beating up bravely in the wake of their stronger sires, or the swift whir and sharp cry of a black diver, would wake me up to read again, and pause again, and again go out into the happy Elysium of fair if fleeting dreams. Now and again the dark hull and streaming smoke of the funnel of some great liner would blot the fair round mirror of the sea; and I used to grow impatient of the apparent slowness and painted stillness with which it moved toward the horizon. But all things end sometime or other. And the great deep would be unspotted and unflecked again.

VII

The Rapture of the Sea.

One thing, however, I missed, — the rapture of the sea, — the keen, stinging pleasure the sounds and scents of the sea gave me when a boy. Of course, it is age, — age with its dulled senses and perceptions, age with its weakened nerves, age with its brain-power perhaps increased and developed, but with all its sentient faculties benumbed, and, alas! controlled almost to the verge of extinction by that dread monitor, Experience. And nothing can give back "that wild freshness of morning." I see things with "larger, other eyes" than in youth. The problems of existence have loomed up greater and more formidable and more mysterious than ever. The problems of life are deeper, and their solution farther away. The single eye of youth that saw but the present has grown to a double vision that is blind to the present, but painfully sensitive to pictures thrown upon its field by the past and the future. "Knowledge has come, but wisdom lingers," — the wisdom of the child on the seashore, filling his ears with the music of the shells, and believing that he hears the roaring of the sea, when he only listens to the hot blood coursing through his own veins.

VIII

In vain.

I whipped up my faculties to catch again that old, far-off, sweet enthusiasm and sense-intoxication of childhood. It was in vain. I called up the memories of the exultation I felt when the deep thunder of the waves

smote my ears in childhood, and the scent of the seaweed was an elixir of Paradise. In vain! The mighty element that intoxicated my senses in childhood now seemed to steep me as in chloroform. I could dream, and dream, all day long. But I could not think; and even reading became irksome. Once or twice I sought to arouse my faculties by writing verses. I failed. Ideas would not come; and I knew well it was of no use to solicit them, unless they came spontaneously. I contrived to jot down some lines which swept across memory from the night-sleeps. But that was all. I felt all the stupor, without the exhilaration, of an opiate. I began to wonder how Coleridge or Shelley felt under the influence of laudanum; and what strange power it gave them to reach such altitudes that no poet, with unsustained wings, could ever touch again.

IX

But twice at least during this fortnight's holiday, I was privileged to see a sudden and unexpected revelation of Nature's magnificence, and to feel the old thrill of surprise and delight which so often in childhood and youth made my pulses throb and my cheek grow pale. It seemed to me that Mother Nature was saying to herself: "This old poetic dreamer and admirer of mine has become so hebetated and outworn that he no longer recognises my loveliness and my power. He has gone after other loves — his speculations, his philosophy, his world of ideas. He does not want any longer such a material creature as I am. The larger and more ethereal spirits, that occupy the high altitudes where he is moving, have made

Once more.

him turn away from me. Let me see if I can call him back to my side once more before he dies. Surely one victory over an old reasoner and world-observer, as well as idealist and dreamer, were worth a hundred easy conquests over the mind and heart of youth." And the dear old Mother did put forth all her arts of coquetry, and — succeeded. I had grown tired of the grey face of the sea, of that long, low line across the horizon, encompassing that dark, melancholy mirror, which seemed to reflect only the sadness of things, — the unplummeted deeps of the human heart, the undiscoverable secrets of existence. And the thunder of the waves no longer smote my senses with delight, that was half fear, half love for the dread element that could seem so gentle and calm, but that bit with the fury of a serpent and smote as with the lightnings of gods. Once more, only once, the sea put forth her power, and clothed herself with a panoply of light, and dragged me a willing worshipper to her feet.

X

My bedroom overlooked the tiny artificial harbour that was formed by two projecting piers; and here, all day, boats and punts, yachts and hookers and fishing-smacks, lolled and tossed on the bosom of the tide. Every evening, too, just at seven o'clock, a group, or rather several groups, of bronzed and stalwart fishermen could be seen wending their way along the pier, laden with nets or cordage or baskets; and one by one they got their fine, strong boats ready, whilst the women watched them, and young lads envied them, and groups of gaily clad girls ran along

At eventide.

the pier as the boats pulled out from the harbour and got into the deep seas. Here a mizzen-sail was hoisted; and one by one, at a few hundred yards' distance from each other, the boats glided softly away to the south and west, until sometimes their white sails seemed but feathers far out on the deep. There they dropped anchor, and put out their nets and lines to catch the treasures which Old Ocean drew into their hands. It was pretty and picturesque, especially when the sun was sinking softly in the west, and his great golden light suffused sky and sea and earth in a pale, yellow radiance. One would have wished them to sing the sailors' chorus, or some wild Gaelic melody; but the Celt has not got over the shyness and silence of centuries as yet.

XI

Then one morning I awoke to hear the plash of oars, the rush of pulleys, and the loud voices of men and women beneath my window. I rose up, flung on a dressing-gown, raised my blind, looked out, and exclaimed, "My God!" The sun had well risen, and the whole face of the sea to the east was suffused with a soft, rosy radiance, so tender, so beautiful, that I could have almost wept for the thought of its evanescence. Across the gulf, too, the cliffs of Knockadoon stood out transfigured in the morning glory; for they were no longer frowning ramparts with deep purple embrasures and dark cobalt foundations, but battlemented walls, stained in light vermilion, and seeming, in the clear tracery of the morning splendour, transparent as the ruddy sky or the flushed face of the sea. Farther to the west, the

Aurora.

blending of colours had deepened, until, where the waves broke softly on the peaty strand, they were almost slate colour. But beneath my window the rosy radiance was cut clear through by the black lines of the piers and the dark hulls of the fishing-boats and the picturesque forms of men and women. These latter were busy in a Babel of tongues, chattering and bargaining for the silver fish which the men flung up unconcernedly from the holds of their boats. The whole village beside was asleep. Nature, with the wilfulness of a woman, was lavishing all this splendour without an eye to see it. The magnificent panorama had vanished when the lazy sleepers woke up, for pleasure or for profit, in the late hours of the morning.

XII

Sea-fogs.

The next morning the same miracle took place. And I, like a penitent who was regretting his indifference, again woke up to see and admire. And then, as if satisfied with her triumph over me, she drew down a heavy, milky fog, that for three days and nights blotted out the heavens and the earth. It was so thick that the powerful light across the little strait was absolutely extinguished except for its lonely watchers on the island; but all day long, and all night, came every minute the deep, mournful voice of the fogbell, muffled and sad, with a strange, funereal tone, that seemed to tell of wrecks and sea-ruins. The grass and heather and hyssop and hemlock on the hills were saturated with moisture; and as I sat in my accustomed seat with my back to the rock, the waves at my feet only visible, I could hear, ever

and anon, the foghorn of some vessel, deeply embedded in the thick folds of the mist, and the answering alarm from some spirit-ship farther out at sea. And sometimes quick spasms of sound would break in succession quite close to the shore, — inarticulate warnings of great peril, — until, like the gasps of an exhausted and terror-stricken creature, the voices would come repeated from farther and farther away, as the trembling ship tore in terror to the safety of the outer deeps.

XIII

And all day long at intervals of ten minutes, and then five minutes, the deep boom of the gun from the lightship at Daunt's Rock, ten miles away, would echo along the shore, until one felt that men and their toyships were everywhere besieged by peril, and were calling to each other by gun and bell, and siren and horn, to beware. How powerless man is, and yet how great! How insignificant, and yet how victorious! How tremendous are the forces Nature brings to bear on his destruction, and yet how skilfully he conquers or evades them! Once, in this deep fog, a great steamer did actually grind her keel against a sunken rock near shore. There was a moment's panic; but she instantly sheered off, and passed safely out to sea. And all the time the lighthouse was flashing its ineffectual light into the very bosom of the mist; and the great lever of the fogbell was being lifted by its powerful machinery up and down every minute to strike the mighty bell, whose tones sank in silence, absorbed in the night-fog, and scarcely struck the white walls of the enclosure

Minute-guns.

that ran down to the deep. Portia's reflection on the power of a tiny candle was reversed. The powers of darkness are greater than the powers of light, after all.

XIV

The Fall of the Leaf.

But this summer dream is obscuring my thoughts of the grey friar, Autumn, showing how dream-pictures are sometimes more powerful than realities; and how a sunny past will extinguish, even in memory, the facts and species of a sombre present. But I am soon recalled to life by one event after another, as if in some mysterious manner circumstances combined to force upon one's faculties all that is sad and melancholy in life with all that is grey and sombre in Nature. For in some mysterious manner, it seems to be always in the autumn season, when Nature is manifesting its tendency to decay and death, that amongst human beings also, the dread symptoms of sickness and dissolution become more apparent. There is a tradition that it is in the Fall of the year the sick and weakly drop silently away. It stands to reason. The vital powers of Nature, of which man is an integral part, are steadily lowered, day by day, in the grey autumnal time; and the human energies, that were buoyed up during the life-giving summer heat, tend to run down and become extinguished as the mercury falls in the double glass that marks heat and moisture; and as the sap descends from leaves to stem, from stem to branch, from branch to trunk, until it sinks into the all-absorbing earth.

XV

And just now I notice that some pale phantoms, who used to pass me in the streets limping painfully along, or leaned up against the sunny wall opposite my window, have disappeared. They came forth from their stuffy sick-rooms, where they had vegetated during the Winter and early Spring; and like plants kept in a cellar, they brought forth the pallor of pain and sickness under the light of the all-powerful sun. And all day long they basked in the warmth and strength of his rays, until even their pale faces became slightly bronzed; and their thin hands assumed a tinge of healthy colour. And hope, the eternal angel, seemed to come back from his banishment; and they could answer with a cheery smile: "Coming around a little, thank God! I think I can pull through the Winter now!" And the passer-by, in the sublime hypocrisy of charity, would murmur: "Not a doubt about it! You're on the mending track at last!" Oh, life, life! what is it that makes a thing so worthless and evanescent seem of such supreme importance to poor mortals?

Phantoms.

XVI

Yes! the phantoms have disappeared. The first grey fog, that came down with its smell of frost in the air, banished them to the gloom and monotony, the darkness and the despondency, of the sick-chamber again. And I follow them in fancy. I see the dread round of daily and nightly suffering. I feel the hours go by, each laden with sighs — sighs in the

The Magic of Sleep.

midnight for the first pale gleam of morning; sighs in the long hours of the day for the merciful oblivion of night. I see them toss and turn on their beds of agony, seeking only one thing, unconsciousness, but seeking that with a prayer that would, we imagine, coerce the eternal powers to grant the one great boon that mortals crave. Yes! so are we constituted! There is no greater gift to mortals than the gift of unconsciousness. When Nature, racked and torn, refuses it, we seek to compel her by the powerful action of deadly poisons. Yes! sleep, sleep, so powerful that it is most welcome when it most resembles Death, is the one thing that makes life tolerable. All waking pleasures are unavailing when they cannot be forgotten in sleep.

XVII

A returned Exile.

Here, for example, is a poor young girl who sat out during the warm days in the sunshine, eagerly grasping every sunbeam to extract from it a life-elixir. A few years ago, conscious of her great beauty, she almost spurned the flags of the village street, as she walked with springing step in all her Sunday finery, and knew that the eyes of many hungered after her. Then her own home became too small for her ambition. America alone was large enough for her desires. She went away, became a unit, an insignificant unit amongst millions, whose eyes, dazzled with the glare of gold, had no sight for her beauty. Then came sickness, sadness, a craving for the old home, where she could at least die in peace, with friendly faces around her. She sat out during these few weeks, patient and sorrowful,

her physical beauty etherealised by the dread disease that was slowly eating away her life. She has disappeared. It is easy to imagine the rest. The eternal hacking cough, the night-sweats, the ever-growing weakness, the depression, the despair — the calling on God at the midnight hour to plunge her into the blessed forgetfulness of a dreamless sleep!

XVIII

And yet, if one in mercy whispers even the name of death as the one hope-giver, she shudders, looks frightened, and weeps. She cries all night long for unconsciousness, for sleep. But the unconsciousness of death is an unspeakable terror. Why this inconsistency? Is not death a blessed thing, — God's greatest and most beautiful angel, who comes to us so softly, and so gently unweaves the bands of flesh, and touches so quietly that wound that the very touch is an anæsthetic; and gradually weakens and uncoils the springs of existence, so that when at last he touches the last frail thread, it snaps without pain, and the soul sinks into a languor that is a sweet prelude to the eternal rest? Why do men fear it? Is it the inertia of life that will not bear transmission? Or the habit of life that will not bear being broken? Or the dread of

Death, the Hope-giver.

> "The undiscovered country, from whose bourn
> No traveller returns"?

Or a foolish fear, as of children who see spectres everywhere, and will not walk on unknown land, lest unseen terrors should leap forth to paralyse or appal?

XIX

Death conquered.

So thought Lord Bacon: "Men fear death as children fear to go in the dark; and as that natural fear in children is increased with tales, so is the other." And again: "I have often thought upon death, and find it the least of all evils. All that is past is a dream; and he that hopes or depends upon time coming, dreams waking." Reason argues against the fear of death and discountenances it. Religion laughs at it: "O Death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" And yet, there seems to be but little use in arguing against it. Foolish men, who know so little, and do so much evil with that little knowledge, call it the "King of Terrors," as if we did not know, as the aforesaid Lord Bacon has already proved, that there is no passion that cannot conquer Death. "Revenge triumphs over it; love slights it; honour aspireth to it; grief flieth to it; fear preoccupateth it; nay, Seneca adds niceness and satiety. Think how often hast thou done the self-same things. It is not only the strong man, and the miserable man, but, even the weary man can wish to die" — that is, weary of doing the same thing over and over again.

XX

Death, the Eternal Law.

Perhaps, outside the magnificent hopes and promises of religion, there is no greater, there is no sweeter anodyne of Death than the reflection: It is the Law! Birth, reproduction, Death, — this is the programme of all things, sentient and insensible,

spiritual and material; it is the unalterable decree in every kingdom, animal, vegetable, mineral. It is even the necessary law, if the universe is to continue. Tithonus was wretched, because immortal. He was placed outside the pale of law, and hence, he craved Death. All must go. The type and species alone remain; and these too must change in form in order to be permanent in reality.

"Nothing abides. The seas in delicate haze
Go off; those moonèd sands forsake their place;
And where they are shall other seas in turn
Mow with their scythes of whiteness other bays.

Lo, how the terraced towers and monstrous round
Of league-long ramparts rise from out the ground
With gardens in the clouds. Then all is gone,
And Babylon is a memory and a mound.

Observe the dew-drenched rose of Tyrian grain —
A rose to-day. But you will ask in vain
To-morrow what it is; and yesterday
It was the dust, the sunshine, and the rain.

This bowl of milk, the pitch on yonder jar,
Are strange and far-bound travellers come from far.
This is a snow-flake that was once a flame, —
The flame was once the fragment of a star." [1]

XXI

And whither all things go, we too are tending. Borne along on the river of Life, now fast, now slow, now gliding smoothly, and anon tossed hither and thither on the surface of ruffled and angry waters, there is no pause, no stay, no hiding under shady banks,

Why are ye Fearful?

[1] Mallock's "Lucretius."

no retreating to forgotten and darkened coverts. The stream of humanity moves ever onwards to the great gulf, and we are borne with it. Let us not repine, nor fret at the inevitable. We are going the way of emperors and conquerors.

"Thither the singers, and the Sages fare,
Thither the great queens with their golden hair.
Homer himself is there with all his songs;
And even my mighty Master's self is there.

There too the knees that nursed you, and the clay
That was a mother once, this many a day
Have gone. Thither the King with crownèd brows
Goes, and the weaned child leads him on the way.

Brother and friend, and art thou still averse
To tread that road? And will the way be worse
For thee than them? Dost thou disdain, or fear
To tread the road of babes, and emperors?" [1]

XXII

An Impartial but Unreasonable Thing.

Yet it is hard to argue against the fear, especially with the young. So many passed by, and they chosen! So many old and forlorn creatures for whom life had no pleasure, because no hope, trembling on the verge, and yet apparently forgotten by the angel Death! So many worthless creatures, whose lives do not contain a single utility, — nay, whose very existence seemed detrimental to every cause and individual with whom they came in contact; and lo! Death passes them by, and leaves the barren fig-trees untouched; and lays his heavy hand on some life, that was bourgeoning out in all fair promises of vast utility to itself and mankind.

[1] Mallock's "Lucretius."

So argues a second patient of mine, a young man, stricken with that dread disease, cancer. He is not impatient nor disconsolate. He is resigned. But he cannot understand. He is perplexed by the mystery of things. He has had his sentence of death duly passed on him; and the numbered hours are fleeting swiftly by. But he is young. He clings to hope. The local doctor is on his holidays. He has a chance now. Perhaps some other may speak a word of hope. He summons him by telegram. He presents the following diagnosis of his formidable disease.

XXIII

"Seven months ago, in South Africa, I underwent an operation for epithelioma of the antrum, necessitating the excision of the left superior maxilla; and, on account of exophthalmus, the left eye had to be enucleated. Since then my voice has been badly impaired; and so I wrote down these particulars, my artificial palate not working properly of late. A few months after the operation, anæsthesia extended along the temple and forehead on the left side. It has now crossed the middle line, and involves the whole forehead and scalp. I have been laid up for five days with a swollen eye-socket. It is with respect to the latter that I wish to consult you. Since the operation, the socket has been in a state of inflammation, with a profuse whitish discharge. It is now greatly swollen. The temple on the same side is also much swollen. The pain is not very great, but there is a feeling of uneasiness and oppression. The wound cavity left by the

A Personal Diagnosis.

operation is looking well, and there is no evidence of recurrence in that quarter. I cannot account for the accentuation of the anæsthesia, for its extension, and for the aggravated state of the eye-socket. I would like you to tackle the eye-socket particularly; that region is very anæsthetic, and is affecting my head greatly. I may mention there is still some granulated tissue and constant extravasation of blood behind the eye-socket or at the floor of the orbit, as I pay constant attention to it, and know how it is getting on."

XXIV

A Secret Science.

I doubt if there were on this planet a more surprised man than that doctor, when he read this diagnosis. The science of medicine is a secret science. Very wisely, its professors have wrapped up all its principles and discoveries in an occult and dead language. Its prescriptions are written in a kind of luminous shorthand, of which only some letters are of Roman type, the rest being cabalistic signs. It is a kind of calyptic cypher of which only one man holds the key. It is pitiful, but instructive to see how an ordinary layman turns over the mysterious paper in his hand, and stares in blank ignorance at it; and to witness his surprise when the chemist glances over it, and proceeds to interpret it in act. Then all medical books are written in great ponderous symbols of sesquipedalian Greek, as if the writers kept Liddell and Scott always on their desks, and picked out the longest and hardest words. And then — watch the contemptuous and angry stare with which any layman, or even neophyte, is

crushed who dares to touch even the fringe of medical mystery. It is a kind of sacrilegious invasion into a region where only the initiated are admitted; and happy is the unhappy wight who is let off easily with the warning: "You had better leave these things alone, young man!"

XXV

Other Sciences.

It is the same with the Science of law. Here the adage holds, "The man who is his own lawyer has a fool for a client." And we know how sternly is the prescription enforced in the courts of justice, that no man can be heard unless through the lips of a lawyer. You may be as learned as Scaliger, and have all the legal lore of Chitty and Bacon and Coke at your fingers' ends; but if you presume to infringe upon the hereditary rights of the legal profession, you may be assumed to have sacrificed your best interests. "By whom are you represented, sir?" is the dire question? "By myself!" "Oh!" And your case is lost, that is, if you are permitted to speak at all; for, in certain courts, you cannot plead except through the instrumentality of a lawyer. Is this right? That is not the question. We are but stating facts — that a cordon is drawn around the learned professions by rule and statute, by prescription and tradition; and all who are not initiated into the mysteries, who have not eaten dinners and sawed bones, are rigidly excluded. Right or wrong this exclusiveness undoubtedly surrounds the professions with a certain atmosphere of reverence which materially helps to keep sacred the inner workings, which would soon be profaned by exposure.

XXVI

Strange to say, it is only theological science that has no such bounds and ramparts as these. It is a commonage where every one may stray at his own sweet will. It has been invaded, overrun by every class and every individual from the beginning of Christianity until now. Under the Jewish dispensation, it was kept apart and sacred from the multitude,—hedged in by every kind of legislation, primitive and prohibitive. No man dared touch the Holy Mountain; no one but the High Priest was privileged to enter the Holy of Holies. One tribe was set apart for the priesthood. All teaching and all legislation came from the lips of a consecrated priesthood. Still more exclusive and dominant were, and are, the sacred hierarchies of the Eastern religions. The Lamas and Brahmins allow no lay-interference with their privileges. Even kings and emperors must keep aloof. Their lamaseries and monasteries are sacred ground, where no one dare trespass without permission. Their traditional teachings are such that no man dares contravene or challenge. But no sooner was Christianity established than a Simon Magus tried to penetrate and purchase its mysterious powers; and from the first, laymen, from the Emperor down to the prefect, sought to usurp the sacred rights of the Christian priesthood, and mould the dogmas of the Christian faith to suit political exigencies or private whims.

Theology a Commonage.

XXVII

Then came the great rebellion, with its cardinal principle that theology was no science; that religion had no mysteries; and that every man had a perfect right to frame his own dogma according to the direction of private interpretation. And whilst all other sciences became more exact in their guiding laws, and sought to render more rigid every day the boundaries of professional exclusiveness; whilst great generalisations broke up into special departments, and each department surrounded itself by *abattis* after *abattis* of rules and ceremonies, the vast domain of theology was broken into by every sacrilegious and impious speculator, and all its mysteries were profaned by hands that held them up to the public gaze either as commonplace truths that no man could deny, or fraudulent presumptions that no man could accept. And to-day, scientific men of every rank and grade, biologists, geologists, astronomers, legislators in every shape, literary men through the press, judges on the bench, and even the "man in the street" crowd through the broken defences and tumbled barricades to plough and sow, and reap a sorry harvest where once was the wheat that made the Bread of Life, and the wine that germinated virgins.

The Great Rebellion.

XXVIII

Apart from the desecration and the unreasoning fury and folly of all this, it is a distinct departure from the secret and inviolable laws that direct the operations of evolution in Nature and Society. For we

An Unscientific Departure.

know that the lower the organism, the more simple are its organs and operations. In certain zoöphytes, each part is capable of every function. As we advance higher in the scale, the functional energies, becoming more extended, demand new organs for their operation; until we reach the higher mammals, where every function has its own specific organ, localised and developed. The same tendency exists in the body politic, where all the energies are again specifically located, and, though obedient to and progressing from a common centre, are concentrated in some council, or society, or department, whose operations, if controlled from a centre, are yet specifically distinct, and more or less independent. In the science of theology alone, there is, on the part of the masses, an idea that, dissolved as a science, it had better be allowed to drift back to primitive elements — which are the thoughts of individuals — for dogmata, and the vagaries of human passion for moral and ethical principle.

XXIX

Theology a Science.

And yet theology is a science, a great science, a complicated science; a science to the upbuilding of which were devoted the energies of the greatest intellects that have become incarnated on this planet. A world of iconoclasts, such as that in which we live, may pass by with unbowed heads the statues of St. Augustine and St. Thomas; and may affect never to have seen the shrines where saints and scholars, like Ambrose and Bernard, are niched for ever. But they cannot break them. And so long as the printing-press shall last, there shall re-

main the record of their studies in the greatest of human sciences, and the results of their researches into the recesses of mysteries, which are to-day, as yesterday, as closed secrets to the eyes of science as they were when men believed that the heavens were domed above the earth as the centre and pivot of space. It is pitiful to see the easy and flippant way in which modern sciolists dispense with the consideration of questions that agonised the minds of Tertullian and Augustine.

XXX

Yes, my good doctor was much surprised. He seemed not able to take his eye from that page where the dying boy had recorded the dread symptoms of the disease that was slowly eating away his life. He whistled softly to himself, looked curiously at the patient, whispered the mysterious words, "epithelioma," "enucleated," "antrum," "maxilla," and finally asked:

No Mystery in Medicine.

"You have been a medical student?"

"No!" was the faint, muffled whisper that came from the diseased throat. "I am a journalist!"

"Oh!"

"But," the doctor said, after a pause, "no one but a medical expert could have written this?"

"I made a study of the disease when I knew I was affected," was the reply.

"Rather a foolish thing," said the doctor, maintaining the professional exclusiveness.

"Not at all," was the reply. "There is no mystery about it."

The doctor shook his head. This was rank heresy to his mind. He turned to me.

XXXI

"Strange," he whispered, although the hideous malady had destroyed the boy's hearing, "how things work. The blow falls here and there; and there appears to be no rule, no uniformity, no consistency."

Ultra Crepidam.

I nodded acquiescence.

"If any one were to ask why this boy, clever, accomplished, enterprising, should have been struck down on the very threshold of a brilliant career, whilst hundreds of mere hinds and louts go free, where would be the answer?"

The good doctor never saw that he was passing *ultra crepidam.* He who would resent, who did resent, the trespass of that poor boy upon the sacred precincts of medical science, was now unconsciously usurping the office of theologian. For medical science has only to deal with facts, I presume, — physiological facts, pathological facts, *materia medica*, etc., etc. What has a doctor to do with philosophy, — with motives, reasons, causes of things? Let him keep to his scalpel and his stethoscope! But no! Every one must have his say about these transcendent mysteries that have ever stupefied and puzzled the human mind, as if they were market-merchandise, to be turned over, and pulled asunder, and examined and valued by every hind, or huckster, or *vivandière*, who wants a cheap bargain. Well, after all, it argues the existence of something more than a beaver or squirrel faculty in man, and, as such, is worthy of some esteem. I thought this, but did not say it to my good doctor. Then I took the thought home with me. It was my property.

Section II

XXXII

The mystery of suffering! The great eternal problem! And yet no problem at all, if we only consider it as a Law of Being. Apart altogether from the higher and transcendent and beautiful teachings of religion, which place an aureole around the crown of thorns on each wounded head, and throw the iridescence of hope athwart the gloomiest and darkest sky, is it not in the nature of things that suffering is inevitable? I look at it under three aspects: (1) As a necessary condition of imperfect beings; (2) as a necessary motive power in carrying on the work of existence; (3) as an unconscious but most noble revelation to higher beings than we are of facts and principles in the great economy of creation that perhaps otherwise would be hidden from them for ever. I know perfectly that all these philosophical reasonings cannot mitigate pain any more than reasoning can disarm Death of its terrors, or soothe an excruciating physical torment. I know no philosophical talisman for anguish or sorrow, except that final hope of suffering humanity: All things have an end. But, nevertheless, it may be in our painless moments a soothing thought that suffering is not the unreasoning and inconsiderate infliction on helpless beings of pain from the hands of a supreme and arbitrary power; but that behind it there may be grave motives and far-reaching designs which our imperfect knowledge may feebly grasp, if we cannot always hold fast to them as a consolatory remedy for our weakness and our woes.

The Great Mystery.

XXXIII

The Inevitable.

It is strange that men will not see how suffering is the inevitable accompaniment of our state of existence. Whether man has fallen from a state of perfection according to Christian truth and belief, keeping still some vague tradition of that happy condition in his eternal dream of the perfectibility of the race; or whether, in the evolutionist theory, he is supposed to be struggling upwards from primary elements towards more spacious conditions and final developments, it must be admitted that this his intermediate state is a state of imperfection, with all the blunted senses, stunted faculties, darkened intellect, and weakened will, that denote a fallen or struggling being. In such a state, suffering is inevitable. Death must be preluded by disease; and the aspiring soul must beat its wings in fruitless efforts to touch an ideal that is ever present, and ever unattainable. Hence, the sublime dissatisfaction that ever haunts the dreams of mortals, — the never-satisfied craving and hunger after an indefinable something that ever eludes us, and that is not to be attained, no matter how frequently we change the surroundings of life and seek to satisfy our unquenchable desires. Hence come mental pain and anxiety, — "the looking before and after and pining for what is not," of which the poet speaks, — the restlessness and irritability, the exaggeration of trifles, the sad presentiments of the future, the bitter remorse for neglected opportunities that beset the weary way, — the *via dolorosa* of human life.

"Nothing begins and nothing ends,
That is not paid with moan;
For we are born in others' pain,
And perish in our own."

XXXIV

No Progress without Pain.

Again, there can be no progress without pain. In pain are we brought forth into the world; in pain do we grow and increase; in pain, perhaps painless pain, do we die. But never a forward step is taken by man or society without pain and suffering. The whole development of human character is wrought, and can only be wrought, by self-denial and suffering, by the patient bearing of weary burdens, by the crushing of one's own will, by the forehead wrinkled and the face agonised under the pressure of torture. All the finest faculties of our nature remain dormant until they wake under the sharp *accolade* of pain. We all know the beauty of a suffering creature, — the unspeakable beauty of death. It is only the sharp chisel of pain that can round the lineaments into such perfect and ethereal loveliness. Take the case of this poor boy. The left profile is, if you like, hideously scarred by his disease and by the cicatrices of the surgeon's knife. The cheek is deeply furrowed and fallen in, where the maxilla was removed; and the eye-socket is swollen and discoloured from the disease that is proceeding beneath. But the left profile — narrow white forehead, great luminous eye, straight nose, and cheek and chin covered with a light, fair beard — is perfect; perfect above all by that colour of gentle paleness that marks the patience of great suffering, endured bravely, and without a murmur.

XXXV

The social body, too, is moved ahead along the wheels of suffering. It is a sad truth that the horrors of war appear to be the necessary preliminaries to advancing civilisation. Every great forward movement in human history has been preluded by conquest. Degeneracy is the adjunct of continued peace. Hence the school of thinkers who maintain that war is a necessity for eliminating the weaker elements of a nation and developing its strength!

Pain the Agent of Civilisation.

> Is it peace or war? better, war! loud war by land and sea,
> War with a thousand battles, and shaking a hundred thrones.

It is famine, too, that scattered the civilising races over the earth. The surplus populations in the old countries, driven to distress and despair by overcrowding, fled their own land with its congested millions, and carried civilisation across seas and lands to black and tawny savages. These in turn yielded under the sword, and the "white man" triumphed. We cannot say much for the morality of such progress: but we are speaking of facts. Famine drove forth the conquerors; the conquered perished by the sword. Civilisation followed in the wake of the latter; that is, along the valleys of suffering and death. The path of progress is the path of pain. Bleached bones and broken hearts mark every inch of its way.

XXXVI

But there is a third consideration, which is for ever rising up before my mind. I can hardly conceive anything so absurd as the proud claim made by us, denizens of this little planet, that we represent the acme of perfection in God's universe; that we are the objective of all evolutionary processes, — the sum total and crowning-point of all the mysterious designs and occult operations of the universe. Man has always seemed to me to be the lowest representative of intellect in the Universe, if he is the highest animal. And I never had the least doubt that there are species and types beyond limit, of spiritual and intellectual essences, either resident, as we are, in planetary worlds, or diffused universally through the ether in which the universe is enveloped. Our conceptions of the seraphim and the cherubim would represent the highest attainable grade in spiritual perfections. But between the seraphim and man, what a mighty gulf interposes! What a vast space to be peopled with great spirits! And what tremendous possibilities for the exercise of the never-tiring, ever-plastic attribute of God's omnipotence!

Grades of Spirits.

XXXVII

Astronomy, too, reveals to us the possibility of the planets, not only of our system, but of greater systems, being peopled with types of pure spirits, or mingled creations, diverse as the faces of men, and numberless as the sands of the sea. That our

Inhabited Planets.

little moth-planet occupies the central position in the universe, which can have no centre, is an assumption so grotesque that men wondered when a distinguished professor advanced the theory last year. We have to judge of the condition of the universe outside ourselves by reason and analogy. And reason tells us what a deordination it would be that only one planet amongst myriads should be inhabited by reasoning and sentient beings; and analogy teaches us that, inasmuch as the conformation of the earth does not differ materially from that of the other planets, there is every reason to suppose that similar conditions are adapted to similar, if higher, races of being; and that Nature, in its mighty evolutions under the All-guiding Hand, has not broken its moulds, nor lost its cunning, when it placed man as master on this tiny world in space.

XXXVIII

The Altruism of Nature.

Now each tiniest item of creation works outward and upward, subserving some higher species. Its energies are not limited to its own existence or welfare; nor even to the continuance and preservation of its own kind. It is the Altruism of Nature — the design of making all things coöperate in one single plan; each working for some higher existence than its own, and subserving some higher and hidden purpose far beyond its ken. For, just as each drop of rain serves the ulterior purpose of carrying salts to the sea; as the coral insect builds an island, and then a continent, while it perishes; as the tiny shellfish dies, after extracting from its own viscera the material that goes to build yonder cathedral; so

every human life has some ulterior purpose, as yet but dimly guessed, but yet most certainly to be revealed. And, as the rabbit or guinea-pig in the hands of the scientist knows nothing in its pain of the vast purposes it subserves, and only knows that it is passing through a mysterious trial under the hands of some superior and powerful being, so we, too, are ignorant of the purposes which we serve throughout the universe of God by the mysterious agency of labour and pain and suffering.

XXXIX

Pain a Revelation.

And may it not happen that, as the shrinking animal gives ideas that are helpful to the higher species of its own creation, so we also may be the means, through labour, agony, and even death, of communicating larger knowledge, nay, perhaps wider help, to beings of whose existence we can form but a vague comprehension, but who are as far beyond us as we are beyond the beasts that perish and are dumb? And may there not be some supreme science, some synthesis of all earthly sciences, such as we are always seeking after, but never attaining; and that all this human pain and suffering under which we blindly labour, and which sometimes seems to us such an infliction of unnecessary cruelty on the part of an all-powerful but capricious Being, are contributory to the perfecting of that science, just as the toxin in the veins of an afflicted beast reveals some secret to the eye of a scientist, who in turn builds therefrom some great theory fraught with illimitable and beneficial consequences to suffering mankind?

XL

Sentence of Death.

So thinks, too, my poor patient, as far as I can distinguish his words spoken through the muffled and distorted medium of a diseased mouth. He had been one of our most brilliant pupils here a few years ago, and had shown a marked aptitude for composition, shorthand, and type-writing. Then, conscious of his powers, and knowing that there was no room for the exercise of them here, he left home, took up a subordinate position on some Irish journals, using every farthing of his salary to buy books. Thence, fired with ambition, he went to South Africa, became sub-editor on an influential paper, with a handsome salary, and was moving upwards and onwards to very high positions, when one day he noticed a slight anæsthesia in the left cheek. It was nothing, apparently, and his medical advisers suggested neuralgia. The theory was consolatory, if not convincing. Then the left eye began to bulge forward, and he sought the help of higher science. The verdict was instantaneous and fatal — cancer. Death in three months, unless an operation was effected. Death in any case, but slightly deferred. And preferring to sleep under the Irish shamrocks at home, rather than beneath the South African veldt, the poor wrecked spirit sought its native land.

XLI

Wisely or unwisely, too, he had made a study of his disease, as we have seen; and he knew the distinction between the various forms of his dread malady as well as his physician. It was pathetic to hear him explaining the exact difference between epithelioma, sarcoma, carcinoma, etc., — words, I could not help thinking, fit to be the symbols of flowers, or other fair and holy things, but now consecrated, or desecrated, to the nomenclature of the most intractable and hideous disease that afflicts poor humanity. But he knows it all; sees in it the indication of the existence of a Higher, controlling Power; murmurs sometimes about his youth, and all its fair promise cut away; dreams of what might have been, had he been allowed to pursue his profession under such glorious and happy auspices. Then, whilst a tear steals forth, glistens and falls, he murmurs that best prayer for us poor, purblind creatures, "Thy will be done!"

"Thy will be done!"

XLII

Thank God, the leaden skies, and the southwest storms, and the driving rain have come at last. It is a strange exclamation of gratitude, and I suppose very few would echo it. And yet, I confess, I prefer the shortened days and lengthened nights, the sombre skies and the sound of storms, to the languor and heat, and the eternal blue of summer days and summer skies. I certainly love the brightness and beauty of a summer morning, when the sun streams

Winds and Rains.

in, and lights up the colours and gilding on my books and pictures; and, in the garden, all sweet, fair things turn their faces towards the light-giver and life-giver. But I shrink from the stare of the great, open eye of a summer day; and the long, dreamy twilights fill me with unspeakable melancholy. I don't know what it is, — whether it is the passing nature of all summer loveliness, or whether it is the lonely setting of evening suns, or the pale aspect of things in contrast with the splendour and glare that have disappeared; but, whatever it is, I tire of its sombre beauty, and cry for my lamp and fireside, for the book that is never so dear as when the pale yellow light falls and pauses on its pages.

XLIII

Then the very stillness of Summer becomes oppressive. There is a languor over all things, an effeminacy of atmosphere and temperature that seems to suggest a sick condition of things, physical as well as mental. The lazy winds that breathe so softly from the south, and feebly lift up the leaves of sycamore and beech, and stir so faintly the sleepy head of the rose, are again suggestive of weakness and languor and debility. Perhaps, too, the aspect of pale consumptives, who were hidden away all the Winter from its rude embraces, and now come forth to sit or walk feebly in the summer heat, may, through some strange association of ideas, suggest sickness and disease. But I don't like it. I want the bellowing and roaring and defiance of Boreas, as he thunders out of the north, and sweeps down on hillside and forest, and shakes and sways the mass-

Welcome, Boreas!

ive frames of yonder giants, and tosses their branches furiously against each other, and strews road and sward and forest glade and the surface of the agitated river with the spoils of countless leaves and berries, and bares the vast arcades till their white trunks seem the newly polished pillars in the great cathedral of Nature.

XLIV

I know no rarer human pleasure than to lie awake at night in the late Autumn or early Winter, and, whilst the cheerful fire is crackling in the grate and flinging giant shadows on the ceiling, to listen to the fore-gathering and bursting of a midnight storm. Probably it is the contrast between our sense of security and comfort and the dangerous elements raging outside that makes the pleasant surroundings so delightful, according to the initial word of philosophy uttered by Lucretius:

The storm-rapture.

> "When storms blow loud, 't is sweet to watch at ease
> From shore, the sailor labouring with the seas;
> Because the sense, not that such pains are his,
> But that they are not ours, must always please."

But, apart from that, there is a sense of the splendour and magnificence of things when the riot of Nature begins afar off in the sky, and its elemental forces, always kept in check by supreme, invisible laws, appear to have broken loose, and, trailing behind them the sundered chains that had bound them, sweep down with irresistible and destructive force on the passive and tortured earth. When the serenities of Nature are broken up, one sees the awful and veiled terrors that lie hidden beneath.

XLV

The Drama of the Storm.

But there is a curious dramatic force or power in these storm-displays. An earthquake, without monition or scenic effect, tears and rends a vast city in pieces. A flash of lightning smites suddenly and swiftly, and the thunder rolls out its salvo of triumph over defeated or shattered nature. But it is a momentary, a transient, and a monotonous demonstration. But in the gathering of a midnight storm far away and far up in the skies and darkness; in the tumult and roar of vast forces collected from the four points of the heavens and flung into inextricable confusion; in the pause and silent girdings and strappings before the great downward charge on the earth; in the fury and determination of the onset as it bears with coherent and irresistible force on town, or hamlet, or forest; in its trophies of rooted trees and the crash that accompanies their destruction, and the flying slates that are lifted like papers and carried onward lightly on the wings of the blast; there is a tragic and sublime revelation that thrills one with a sense of awe, and a corresponding sense of selfish delight at one's own safety.

XLVI

Autumnal Rains.

Next to that sense of pleasure and safety is the delight of listening on an autumnal night, when it is dark and still, to the steady, rhythmic, musical fall of slow, heavy, autumnal rains. The zip, zip, of the rain-drops falling in the darkness, and gathering in larger globules on the red and yellow leaves; the swish

of the channel runlets carried on as if by some kind of capillary attraction to the river, as the river is borne by its own hidden laws towards the sea; the stillness and sombreness of the autumnal night; and the symbolism of autumnal decay and weeping and darkened skies, — all have a touch of that sweet, sad melancholy, which, if we are to believe old Fletcher and our own experience, has something in it more daintily sweet than the vain delights and passion-swept nights of the votaries of pleasure and fashion. Yes! I think the Autumn of the year, though it is bereft of all the joyance and pleasance of Spring, is best after all. It seems, at least, to symbolise what is best; that is, fruitage and harvesting, and the rest that comes after labour.

XLVII

The Autumn of Life.

So, too, I think the Autumn of life is best. I admit that youth has its raptures and enthusiasms, — its intense enjoyment of the present, its magnificent dreams of the future. The sun shines out in all his splendour and majesty. That grey, sombre cloud, experience, which warms and fertilises our little lives, has not yet thrown his shadow across our path. We live in the present moment, which is the sum-total of all philosophy; we ignore the past with all its faults and blunders and sins; and we look forward to the future under the shining iris of eternal hope. And yet youth has its pains and penalties too, — its uncertainties, its disappointments, its keen pangs of unreturned passions and unrequited loves; its heat and fury and headlong plunging into abysses, whence it emerges with broken wings and shattered nerves. Yes! the au-

tumnal sorrows are less keen; and if only the middle-aged could keep that great secret of youth, — to live in the present moment, and let the future and the past take care of themselves, I think it would be the supremely happy period of our mortal existence.

XLVIII

Autumnal Acquaintances.

I am confirmed in this conviction by the few autumnal acquaintances I have made. Or rather, I should say, "had made," for now they have become phantoms of the past, shadows thrown across the canvas through the magic lantern of life. Some are real phantoms, — glimmering ghosts looking at me with their spectral faces from eternity. Others have passed beyond my ken for ever. If I fix their contours and colours on this page, there will be no unkindness, if we are to believe the words of the poet: "The proper study of mankind is man!" I do not at all agree with the famous aphorism. I think the subject a poor one at the best. The proper study of mankind is the individual's soul, laid bare under the searchlight of conscience; and the mysteries of being; and the secrets that underlie the flower and the star; and the evolution of life and its ultimate term; and all the mighty questions that have agitated the world from the beginning, and will continue to agitate it to the end of time. But I seize on the liberty of painting my fellow beings, because they illustrate my theories about the Autumn of life, — its serenities and cares, its remorses and anticipations, its claim for precedence above the hot passions of youth, and the subdued but not extinguished fires of middle age.

XLIX

My first study is not a remarkable one. He is easily met with in daily life. He is a thoroughly successful man. He is young still, only in the forties. There is no mark of decay or failure about him except that a few lines of silver are shot through his blue-black, bushy hair. This is creased over the left temple, and brushed back, thick and glossy, over his head. He looks at you with cold, clear blue eyes, mild in their radiance, but set deep and fast, as if they were embedded in adamant; for they do not seem to look at you, but to fall on you and remain fastened to your face. There are two well-marked lines in the short, stubby, firm nose, which is squared at the tips. He is always as closely shaven as a judge, and his face is blue-black from the razor. And this shows the straight slit that marks his mouth, and the square, firm chin beneath. He never smiles, or smiles in such a sort as if he chid and scorned himself for smiling. No man ever saw his teeth in speech or laughter. He has all his means cosily and safely invested in five per cent stock. He gives admirable dinners, and always finds people to eat them. His plate, his ware, his servants are perfection. He accepts the praises of men politely, but with evident incredulity. He forces champagne on them, but sips a little Hochheimer himself. He has never married, nor touched a card, nor betted on a horse, because he abhors all chance. Everything must be a dead certainty to him. He goes every year to Marienbad to ease his liver and get the fur out of his arteries. He

A great Success.

figures largely in subscription-lists; and having made everything snug and secure in this world he is trying hard to secure the hereafter also. He has some suspicion that all his gains are not lawful; and he is covering the doubt with munificent charities.

L

But a Mediocrity.

But he is autumnal — that is my point. He has all the serenity of grey skies and mild weather, the slightest touch of incipient decay, but all the largesse in health and wealth that the years have garnered for him. He is enjoying the harvest of life, reaping all its blessedness, rejoicing in all its fulness. He has made no mistakes that would now embitter with remorse his repose; and he is cautious, but not fearful, of a future whose uncertainties he has calculated and reduced to a minimum. He comes near perfection, yet falls infinitely short of it. Infinitely? Yes. He is only, after all, a calculating machine — a thing that is wound up every day, and every day does precisely what it did the day before. He is too uniformly successful to be human. He can never rise above mediocrity. He can never make great mistakes, and do great things. He lives on the lower levels of self, hedged around by caution, fenced by prudence, safeguarded by foresight. The eternal heights are not for him. The struggle, the fall, the repeated and gallant attack, the scramble, the wounds, the gaining of one ledge after another, the final leap over the last barrier, the planting of the flag on the citadel, with the *j'y suis, j'y reste* for his motto, are not for him. Leave him alone down there with his pieces of metal and his smug hypocrisy! He has no part with the great ones of the earth.

Stockton, Calif.

LI

My second type is the very antithesis of this. He has plunged suddenly downwards from affluence to poverty, and has kept his equanimity unruffled. He had been in the enjoyment of some thousands a year; had had a suburban villa so filled with all sorts of art-treasures that one could scarcely move around his rooms. The walls were so lined with etchings and engravings, statuettes and pictures, bronze busts and plaques, that scarcely one square inch of paper was visible. Out of doors his gardens stretched up in stately terraces, one rivalling the other in splendour, until the whole beautiful vista terminated in a pavilion, again filled with all kinds of costly and artistic things gathered from repositories in the great cities of the world. Here, from time to time, that is very often, he brought together numerous friends from city and town, regaled them with every luxury, amused them with every kind of entertainment, until the place became a little Paradise above the sea, which lent to the scene its own enchantment. Then came the crash. The whole thing vanished like a dream. It was many years after that when I visited the place again. I had seen it in the very zenith of its glory, and had taken away and stored up in the maps of memory a beautiful picture of the place, of its surroundings, of its generous and kindly master. I passed by in the dusk of the evening. The high wall that shielded from vulgar observation all this loveliness was broken down. I went in. The magnificent pavilion was a mass of ruin; its perfect flower-beds

A Paradise and a Ruin.

were overgrown with nettles. The splendid urns that capped the pedestals were slimy and broken. It was a picture of ruin and desolation.

LII

Guarda e Passa.

Soon after I met the former master of this ruined paradise. Although past his seventieth year, he was still in all his autumnal splendour. Fate and ill-fortune had not touched him. The same brightness, the same cheerfulness, the same bonhomie, the same optimism that had made him the centre of his circle some years before, had not abandoned him in adversity and penury. "I am a happier man to-day," he said, "than when I had thousands to spend. I have a room during the summer down near the sea, and two rooms here in the city for the winter, and a cool hundred a year. I have no responsibility now. I need n't ask John, Dick, or Harry to dine, and to tell you the truth," he added, with a smile, "I 'm not likely to be asked myself."

"What?" I cried. "You, who entertained like a prince — do you mean to tell me that you are never challenged by any of your former friends to a paltry dinner?"

"Never!" he said frankly. "And what is more, they cut me here in this very street!"

"The hounds!" I could n't help saying. "Do you mean to say that not even —— has an open house for you?"

He shook his head, but always smiling.

"He does n't see me when we pass here. Or rather he does, and goes to the other side of the street."

LIII

"Why, the last time I saw him," I cried, "'t was in the Pavilion. He had a glass (and a good long, tall one it was) of champagne in his hand, and he was diving into a lobster salad as hard as he could. I remember I had to jump his long spider legs when I was coming away."

A Philosopher.

"My dear fellow," he said, "don't you know 't is all human nature? When I had all these friends at the Pavilion, feeding them and entertaining them, I was pleasing myself. There is *one* phase of human nature. When *they* choose to cut me, there is *another*. Did I expect anything else? Certainly not. I know the world too well. And what difference does it make? I can now pass along here without bothering about anyone. I can stop and look at the shop windows without being molested. I know no one, and no one knows me. *Tant mieux!* Hallo! Jiff! Jiff! Jiff!"

He took a boatswain's whistle from his vest pocket and looked anxiously around. Far away, a little black, woolly terrier was dodging tram-cars, side-cars, and passengers. When she heard the well-known whistle she scampered over to her master's feet.

"Good day," he said; "I am glad to see you for old times' sake."

"Good day," I replied; "I am glad to have seen the greatest Irish philosopher after Berkeley."

LIV

Another Type.

It is a gusty, windy, autumnal day. The wild west wind has burst his bonds and is thundering up from the horizon, driving huge black clouds before him, like the disorganised phalanxes of a conquered army. And he has caught in his fierce embraces the forest trees, and shaken them, and clashed them together, till the whole sky is mottled with flying leaves, spinning in the whirlwind; and the ground is growing thick with the red refuse of the dying year. And, quite appropriately, another autumnal type of character crosses my path. He is grizzled and gray before his time; and some sharper chisel than the years has cut channels in his cheeks, and sunk the orbits of eyes that smoulder in repose, but gleam with a terrible light when you touch one subject. And how can you avoid it, when it embraces everything of interest, — that is, men and women — the world — the race — humanity? Tolerant enough, polite, even charitable in a large measure, he becomes absolutely ferocious when you turn the conversation on the *Zeit-Geist*. The fact is, he commenced badly, — with a large, childlike, hopeful, trusting faith in human nature, which has now changed into a fanatical hatred. I can quite understand it, although he has never explained.

LV

Early Education.

I see him coming forth from a home where he was surrounded with all that was sweet and beautiful and sacred, where he never leaned against anything harder than a pillow, and the flutter of a roseleaf was not allowed

to ruffle his sleep. He was taught — *O stulti et caeci corde!* — that the whole world was like this! — that truth, honour, purity, sweetness, modesty, benevolence, were to be his guardian angels through life; and that, above all, he should smile on the world to get back smiles in return. It was a long story, the story of his disillusion, for he clung with despairing tenacity to his childhood's principles, until, one by one, they came to be disproved, and the last shred of their protection was torn away, leaving him naked to his enemies. What was worse, he found, in all authors who had become sacred to him by reason of their lofty standing in literature or from early associations, that the same principles, endeared to him by early teaching, were carefully inculcated until they had become a faith, a religion, interwoven into his life.

LVI

The progress of the world, the perfectibility of man, the advance of the race from civilisation to a yet higher civilisation, the elimination of all physical evil and all moral taint, until the apex was reached, where man should stand forth the immortal realisation of an idea, — all these phrases and sentences had become the symbols and embodiment of the theories that had touched the enthusiasm of his youth, and inspired the more sober opinions of middle age. Alas! slowly and painfully he awoke to the knowledge of human imperfection, deepening, as the years advanced, into a knowledge of human ignorance and iniquity, and culminating in the autumnal years into a recognition or belief in almost universal

Disillusion.

depravity. He was not saddened, but maddened, by the revelation. Even though it had slowly grown into a conviction, it carried with it the shock, the surprise, of a sudden unveiling of deeps too terrible to be contemplated or measured. Like some monomania that is suddenly engendered by brain fever, or that grows out of painful experience, his mind was ever revolving around it; and his conversation, no matter from what distant pole it started, invariably turned back to the one topic on which the wheels of thought moved as on a pivot.

LVII

Education and Experience.

"I can pardon a good deal," he would say, "but I cannot condone your crime in educating children as you do. You teach them that it is dishonourable to lie or steal; you teach them to be merciful and kind and self-effacing; you teach them an altruism which is divine rather than human. And you teach all this on the understanding that the world will give back as it receives, and mirror the riant and bland expressions of ingenuous youth. You take that child from school, and the first lesson the world teaches him is, that all the wheels of life and society are moved by lying and hypocrisy. You place that boy behind a counter where, if he lies not, he is instantly dismissed. He is taught, and not only taught, but ordered, to put a price on his goods and merchandise not according to market values, or current charges, or a scale of legitimate profit, but according to the appearance of his customers. You put him in a fair or market. He instantly knows that he must lie foully for self-protection, for

every man amongst these thousands has come hither to swindle or to cheat. You give him a profession. He lies with his fingers on his patient's pulse. And he will save the most consummate scoundrel from the gallows, and drive the most innocent beneath it, for that bribe called a fee."

LVIII

"Look at your Courts of Justice. Every policeman knows that to gain the good-will of his officer, he must swear up to the mark. Every Crown Prosecutor feels that he is not there to discriminate the guilty from the innocent; but to put the halter around the neck of that trembling wretch in the dock. The quarry has to be run to ground, and he has to do it. That is all! His professional reputation will suffer if that wretch escapes. Tears of wife or children, or their unutterable delight; despair of devils, or ecstasy of angels, such as will alternate in these human hearts contingently upon the one word uttered by yonder bland foreman, — these have nothing to do with the matter. He wants that one word, *Guilty!* otherwise that venison pasty will be tasteless, and that champagne will be flat as ditchwater. And all the time Justice stands blindfolded with her scales in her hands. Why should the bandage fall or be removed? Will not her paid advocates lead her aright, and drop that heavy sword into the scales against the condemned with a solemn and conscientious *Vae Victis?*

Justice blind.

LIX

A Fagin University.

And your statesmen! Here is the sublime! "He has lied boldly," said Talleyrand. "There's the making of a mighty statesman in him." "Diplomacy," "statecraft," "political foresight," "civic wisdom," etc., etc., what an accommodating language! How it lends itself to euphemisms! And how beautifully men gather up the skirts of easy words and wrap them around bald and naked ugliness, as the clothes of the world hide and dissemble all the ugliness of deformed humanity! "But," he cried, with a fillip of his finger, "a truce to all that! I don't heed it! Let the world damn itself in its own fashion. I'm not going to play the part of the faithful Abdiel. But," he cried with bitter emphasis, "if I had the education of children in my hands, I would have a Fagin-school with several Artful Dodgers in every parish to teach the young idea how to adapt itself to the larger and more intricate systems of prevarication and swindling that are current in the wide world of men. And I would teach them to steel their hearts against every human feeling; and smile as their seniors smile when they are practising the arts of hypocrisy and deceit."

LX

A lurid Sunset.

I shuddered at this tirade against the species. He went away with his head down and a frown on his fine features. And, as if to emphasise his lurid and thunderous descriptions of a fallen world, the autumnal sunset

framed itself into such an aspect of magnificent horrors that I began to think the end of all things had come, and the wrath of the celestials was about to descend on a doomed world. All the western horizon up to forty degrees of the zenith was piled with blue-black clouds, through which, here and there, were purple strata into which, as the sun descended, the lowering darkness blended and softened into vast areas of dark-red splendour; whilst farther away, and on the edge of the horizon, sudden openings in the piled masses of vapour revealed great fields of scarlet and yellow radiance, serrated, rounded, piled, heap on heap, in vast cumulative masses, which assumed, in the ever-varying light, one colour more blinding and radiant than another. But, where the heavy purple clouds hung motionless on the verge of the horizon, there seemed to break through them here and there, vast ragged caverns, irregular but well defined — here a Gothic arch, there a Cyclopean cave, farther on, a great round dome: but all as black as midnight. "It is the vestibule of Hell," I said.

LXI

The next evening, I thought, I should not let even one of such glorious October sunsets escape me. Fading and evanescent — as all beautiful things — indeed, as *all* things are (but somehow the beautiful seems more frail than the sombre and the dreadful, probably because we wish it to remain), — yet, there is no reason why we, too, frail and evanescent beings, should not take from them such pleasures as they afford us. And surely, if there be a harmless grati-

Cirrhi and Cumuli.

fication, it must be that which arises from the contemplation of such sublimities as the mighty Artist and Architect of the Universe prepares for his wondering, but ungrateful children. This evening, as if with the touch of a magician's wand, all the sombre splendours of last night had vanished; but there was quite enough of water-vapour to catch and reflect the beauty of the dying sun. Instead of vast purple and black cumuli, resting like some mountain of desolation and grandeur on the rim of the horizon, long strata of cirrhous clouds stretched from north to south in parallel lines. The eastern horizon was crowded with pink cloudlets, darkening to deep purple on the sky line; and in the zenith, the faint and feathery shadows were crimsoned, and then gently vanished, as the sun fell from his orbit into the burning and glowing west.

LXII

An Evening-star.

But all the other cirrhous flakes of cloudlets were masses of burning gold resting on foundations of grey vapour, which, in turn, as the departing rays of the dying sun struck them, were transmuted into red and yellow nuggets of molten metal, with an occasional break through the green sky, as of an alloy to test their value. I had to shade my eyes from their blinding splendours, until, with involution after involution, the glowing masses melted into each other, or dropped their golden radiances from cloud to cloud as the sun descended. It was as if some potent stage-manager or stage-painter was flinging his majestic colours broadcast over the vast curtain of the heavens, until, his palette run dry

and exhausted, the splendours faded away, so silently, so gradually, with so much tenderness and pathos, that I could only think of the farewell kiss of a dying child, or the gradual fading away of those spirit-faces that artists have drawn on canvas, but never seen in the flesh. Then out came one star, dancing and caracoling in the broad heavens that he had now to himself. "Pah!" I cried, for the sorrow of the thing had crept into my heart, "it is like a ballet dancer on the altar of a deserted cathedral!"

LXIII

"Say rather a herald of eternity!" said a voice, and a soft hand rested on my arm. I did not shake it off. I did not shake it off, because it was my Poet, my dreamer of dreams, my *Alter Ego*, — the being with whom alone I can freely converse, and open out my mind with the certainty of being understood and believed. With him alone I am at ease, for to him alone am I intelligible. When I converse with other men I feel that I am speaking to statues, which stare irresponsively at me. When I speak with him I know I am addressing a soul. With other men I speak about human topics: — their politics, their commerce, their wars, their food, their dress. With him I speak of higher subjects, — the soul, eternity, the course of history, the trend of human events; Nature, — the eternal Spring, earth with its thousand aspects, the Heavens with their dark secrets, Life, and the shadow that waits for us all with the keys. If ever I touch on merely human things, a cloud of disappointment and vexation crosses his fine features. He is eloquently

My Doppel-Ganger.

silent, and runs his fingers through tangled and uncombed locks, with just now the winter blossoms beginning to gleam through their gold. When I speak of higher things, his face glows. The fountains of the great deep are broken up.

LXIV

An Apology for Anger.

"What are those tears for?" he said, for my eyes were red with the sorrow of the sunset, — type of all ephemeral and vanishing things.

"For the sorrow of the world," I said, "and its sad destinies; for the perishing of all that is most fair, and the permanence of all that is foul and sordid. For the earth, which is but a cradle of suffering; and for man, who weeps when he is born."

"But you were more than this," he replied. "You were angry, and you used a scornful expression. Now, that is an evil mood towards Nature or towards man."

"Angry?" I cried. "Yes! I was. Who could help being angry in face of such deceitful and fading splendours? And then, as if to mock me, out comes that flippant and foolish star, dancing on the floor of the firmament, and flapping his fingers in my face as if in derision? Why, 't is all mockery, mockery, — earth, and sea, and sky, and the faces of children, and the roses in my garden! Underneath all is the grinning visage and the castanets of Death!"

"Yes! yes!" he cried, with an impatience that rarely showed itself in his fine face or courtly manners. "But why anger? Don't you know that the inevitable is also the indispensable; and that it

would never do for ephemeral beings such as we to be brought face to face with immortal beauty?"

LXV

"There! You are always saying hard things," I cried. "The inevitable is the indispensable! What is it? What do you mean?"

Res Caducae.

"What do I mean? Why, we have talked of these things a hundred times over, and yet you ask me what I mean. I mean simply this, that so long as we are but passing shadows, we are not capable of being confronted with infinite and permanent realities. That in fact, permanence is not for us, only the *res caducae*, the flitting and fading phantoms that belong to an order of things that preludes the stability of eternity. Hark, friend! If all that splendour over which you now wept had remained, you would have tired of it in an hour and gone back to your books, murmuring: 'The eye is not filled with seeing; nor the ear satisfied with hearing.'"

It was true; and I had only to take refuge in silence.

"But mark how foolishly you spoke," he continued. "You wept over a piece of painted vapour — a little aerial moisture reddened by the setting sun; and you ridiculed what? The mighty sun, Arcturus, to which *your* sun is but a farthing candle, and which is now lighting up with unimaginable splendour the atmospheres of planets, to which our little earth is but a sand-grain. It is the old, old story. We cling to shadows and weep for them; and then blaspheme the Eternal."

LXVI

"But, but," I cried, confused, "you speak thus because you are not mortal. You have no human feeling. You live amongst the stars. There is nothing but cold, frozen thought up there on the altitudes where you dwell with your poets and dreamers. Look you, my friend, the tear that soils the cheek of a little child is more to me than if your Arcturus were to heave and burst his elephantine bulk, and strew all space with his fragments. This is our world; and it is enough for us, at least whilst we are here."

Mocking the Eternal.

"Quite true," he replied. "Then why are you always dreaming, dreaming, dreaming of other things? Why did you sadden in that sunset? It was like yourself, transient and paltry. Why did you not accept it as such? No! You went out beyond it; and you said it mocked you; and you, in turn, mocked the Eternal."

"It's enough to make any one savage," I cried, —"this eternal duplicity and deception of Nature. Lo! splendours as of the third heavens, and behold, they are gone whilst we cry to them to remain for ever!"

"'T is not a subject for mockery, or savage anger," he said, meekly.

"What then?" I cried.

"Infinite Pity!" he said.

LXVII

"And men, with their infinite and ever-winding intrigues and deceptions?"

"Infinite Pity!" he said.

Infinite Pity.

"And those white women, half-angels, until you suddenly see some flash of soul that reveals their deformity?"

"Infinite Pity!" he said.

"And those placed aloft in the high domains of the world, to be burning and shining lights to their generation, until you come near and see the flame of their spirit flickering, unsteady, darkened with the smut of carbon, and swaying to and fro in every gust of passion?"

"Infinite Pity!" he said.

"And mighty statesmen, ordering the destinies of nations, but prepared to change sides and principles for a piece of ribbon from a sovereign, or a whiff of popularity from the great unwashed!"

"Infinite Pity!" he answered.

"And teachers,— poets, preachers, prophets, with their 'everlasting yeas' and 'everlasting noes,' leading mankind by the hand up the steep escarpments where valour and truth alone can find a footing; and then suddenly descending to the basest levels to quarrel over their cups, or play the valet to some coroneted patron?"

"Infinite Pity!" he still answered.

LXVIII

I shook him off — this *Doppelganger* of mine. I was wroth with him and with myself, wroth, above all, because I had to determine was this the final answer — the last response to the eternal enigma.

A Distinction.

Infinite Pity!

For all suffering and harmless things, yes! For the redbreast frozen into iron on a January morning; for the wounded creature of the woods that creeps into its hole to die unseen; for the silver wonder of the brooks that lies gasping on the grass, held in the fierce steel of the fisherman; for my aged dog, who lies in his hutch in my yard and looks at me with such piteous dying eyes, they haunt me all the day long; for our human brother or sister, who calls for night, and night forgets its mercy, and who watches the faint dawn glimmering through the window-pane, with the prospect of another day of anguish; for the wretch in the dock, with the merciless faces around him, steeled against all compassion by merciless law; for the victim helped to the scaffold, his arms supported by warders lest he should fall; for the last October sunset, and the last rose that hovers in my garden over beds of snow, — for all weak things, for all stricken things, for all sad things, and all dying things, — Infinite Pity! Yes! By all means! But for all the strength that smites pitilessly; for all the cunning that intrigues successfully; for all the duplicity that lies boldly; for all the smiles that cheat blandly; for all the tyranny that grinds mercilessly; for all that is strong and severe and pitiless; for all that is loathsome and degrading and maculated, — Infinite Pity? No!

LXIX

A Good Shepherd.

As the prophet of old foretold of the sweet and gentle Shepherd of Humanity, I think I could gather up and fold in my arms all tender, gentle, and frail things on earth, no matter how passion-swept, or into what deep abysses betrayed by their own inexperience or the malevolence of others. Nay, even for one that "wanders like a lost soul upon the Stygian bank, waiting for waftage," I feel I could have great pity, which is akin to great love. But for the base nature, that comes to you sometimes in life, rubbing his shoulder against yours to pick your pockets, tossing out carelessly and confidingly a petty secret to get at your sealed and solemn sorrows, and then snap you up, as Vivien did Merlin in the enchanted oak; for the creature who comes fawning and purring around you, proffering his petty gifts, and protesting his disinterestedness until, thrown off your guard, you fling the creature what he wants, and he goes his way, his hand on the button of his pocket; for all puny souls that have no circumference or scope of vision beyond that of a coin, and who think more of a piece of ribbon than of the colours of a sunset, and whose base insolence to the weak is hardly more irritating than their base subservience to the strong, — I confess to a feeling of repulsion akin to that one feels for slimy and dangerous things; no great wish to crush or annihilate, but a decided desire to shun and avoid, and place some impassable thing, an ocean or a Sahara, between us!

LXX

The Miracle of Adaptation.

And yet — are not these things, too, a subject for infinite wonder, — wonder at the miracle of adaptation that seems to exist everywhere? For, after all, without moral evil how can there be moral virtue? If all men, by a miracle, or rather by a transformation of our nature from its striking and painful contrasts, were reduced to a dead level of uniform goodness and perfection, where would be those trials that develop all the grandeur of the great and heroic? If Xanthippe did not create the genius of a Socrates, she at least has helped us to know him better. Without an Antiochus, should we have had the heroism of the Maccabees; the grave chastity of Susannah, without the perfidy of the elders? Had there been no Nero or Domitian, where would be the superb record of the countless martyrs of the Coliseum? It needed the malice of a Gesler to create a William Tell, the state policy of Napoleon to paint on the pages of history the gentle bravery of the Duc d'Enghien or the fearless manhood of Hofer. We could not weep for the martyred nuns of Compiègne had there been no Robespierre or Marat. And to ascend to the highest — where would have been the supreme tragedy of our race, if Jewish priests had been generous, and Pilate had hearkened to the plea for justice from the lips of his wife?

LXXI

So, too, on a lowlier scale, we find that all good seems to arise from evil. Endurance cannot exist without hardship, patience without annoyance, serenity without pain, joyousness without injustice, chastity without temptation, meekness without provocation. If the world was reduced to one dead level of happiness, mankind would grow hebetated from want of energy. It was cold and hunger that framed the flint arrowheads and bone needles, the relics of pre-Adamite man over yonder in Kent's Cavern. It is the sense of the same evils that puts Australian beef on the London markets, and places the skin of an Arctic seal on the shoulders of some woman of fashion. Necessity, that is, pain, begets energy; and energy develops faculties that otherwise would weaken and perish from lack of exercise. In the moral order, it is the same. Moral evil begets Virtue. The narrow, distorted, and vicious soul, prone to deceit and aggression, and chuckling at its own trivial and transitory success over some larger and nobler mind, is quite unconscious that it has been the means, the fertilizing agent, of a larger growth in the latter. "All things coöperate unto good for those called to be saints," said the Apostle. And may not this principle be the strongest proof of immortality,—that the greatest evil shall produce the largest good, and from the dark and bitter root of death shall spring the undying flower of immortality?

Evil the Root of Good.

LXXII

Two books. Two books lay on my table — two books by the man who, if he has not interpreted rightly the spirit of the age, has at least laid bare, with a pitiless hand, its turpitude and deformity. They were the *Kreutzer Sonata* and the *Resurrection* of Count Leo Tolstoy. I had read them before, with unutterable loathing. I took them up now to refute my *Doppelganger* and end this tale of Infinite Pity. Here, I thought, is humanity under its most fetid and loathsome aspect. Let us see how it appeals. Yes! nothing could be worse. These books should never have been written — should never be read. For such a race there is nothing but destruction, earthquakes yawning beneath its feet, or lightnings as of Sodom smiting from above. One could not help recalling the lines of Dante:

"Ed io, che di mirar mi stava inteso,
Vidi genti fangose in quel pantano,
Ignude tutte, e con sembiante offeso.

"Questi si percotean, non pur con mano,
Ma con la testa, e col petto, e co' piedi,
Troncandosi co' denti a brano a brano."
INFERNO, CANTO VII, 109–115.[1]

[1] "And I, who stood intent upon beholding,
Saw people mud-sprent in that lagoon,
All of them naked and with angry look.
They smote each other not alone with hands,
But with the head, and with the breast and feet,
Tearing each other piecemeal with their teeth."

LXXIII

What pity could be lavished here? What pity for men, selfish, brutal, pleasure-loving, heedless of the dread issues that follow the consummation of their crimes? What pity for those women, frail, intriguing, sinking deeper and deeper into the awful Styx of infamy into which passion had plunged them? What pity for officials, who had lost even the very semblance of humanity in the exercise of their brutal and bestial duties? What pity for prisoners, hardened in guilt, and flinging aside all decencies under the despair of their degradation? What pity for the husband, consumed with jealousy of his wife? What pity for the wife, repudiating her sacred duties for the sake of her appearance?

A Gleam of Hope.

Yes! it was all brutal, loathsome, animal, in its disgusting details.

And yet, when all is ended, and one sees the feeble struggling upward of the diviner instinct under such an awful weight of human depravity; when one reads of Pozdnisheff struck with remorse at the thought of how the fatal steel pierced his wife's corset, and how he felt when the dagger ran easily through the soft, yielding flesh, and he saw her swollen and distorted features under the death-agony; when one reads of Katusha, redeemed at last, and Nekhlúdoff following up his one sin with a life-repentance, the thought will occur that the race is not hopelessly lost; that there is a gleam of hope yet irradiating the Stygian gloom of modern life. And the word will spring unbidden to the lips,— Nemesis and Destiny? No. Infinite Pity? Yes!

Section III

LXXIV

The Orient.

With all their despotisms, and arbitrary and ferocious customs, we can forgive the Easterns because of two features in their character, — their dignity, and their tenderness towards all weak and suffering and ignoble things. The former feature stands out in superb contrast with the essential vulgarity which, side by side with commercial immorality, is a characteristic of our Western civilisation of to-day. Some writer has said that the manners of the rising generation are non-existent. The reason is plain. The foundation of all good manners, and, indeed, of all morality, is reverence; and reverence is not an attribute of our age. Nay, irreverence, the supercilious contempt and levelling down of all things to some common denominator of vulgarity and baseness, appears to be the peculiar feature of advanced civilisation. And, as a *species infima*, or lowest grade in that vulgarity, is the spirit of curiosity, — the desire to know all secrets; the prurience for seeking out and exposing all kinds of hidden *arcana*, in religion, in science, in domestic life, in social intercourse; and a kind of ghoulish delight when some precious secret is laid bare for base imagination to batten upon.

LXXV

The Spirit of Curiosity.

This spirit of evil is everywhere. It lurks in our legislation, it inspires atheistic science, it revels in law-courts and scandals, it is the basis of unholy romances and novels. It hides behind the arras or in the cabinets of bedchambers, like that unspeakable Iachimo in "Cymbeline," or some old, garrulous, chattering Polonius, who lurks inside the friendly cover of tapestries to find secrets, and perhaps his death. There is nothing too sacred for its prying eyes. The things that hitherto men guarded as the apple of the eye are ruthlessly torn open and exposed. The governments of the world empower a boy-clerk, who has just successfully passed some trivial civil-service examination, to probe and search into the most private affairs, and demand, with contemptuous insolence, a full return of personal incomes and revenues; and those secret accounts, which men kept hidden even from their wives and children, are now seen and inspected by a stranger, who may reveal them, or use them for personal profit or revenge against the unhappy man, who is thus placed absolutely in his power. And after death, by the same iniquitous legislation, that is utterly regardless of private rights, the last will and testament that had been locked up from the eye of the nearest and dearest friend is ruthlessly opened, and exposed to the gaze of an irreverent and scoffing public in the pages of every newspaper. The excuse is, the public demands it, which proves our thesis, that the world has become hopelessly and irredeemably vulgar.

LXXVI

Symbols.

Contrast with this the traditional reticence and dignity and reserve of the East. Even in the seclusion and inviolable secrecy of the Oriental harem there is a certain sacredness which no child of the Prophet dare violate. The *Yashmak* of the East is symbolical. Symbolical also is the abandonment of the veil as an article of dress in the West; and with this abandonment, and, as a necessary consequence of it, the loathsome realism and personal exposure of our ball-rooms and theatres. When will mankind understand that clothing is the only thing that gives its uncouth form the semblance of dignity and beauty, and that secrecy is the guarantee of its safety; that reserve is the first and last passport to respect; and reticence the only shield against danger? "He wears his heart on his sleeve" used to be an encomium until the second phrase, "for daws to peck at," showed its intrinsic extravagance and folly. But the fact remains that Western civilisation, fiercely contrasted in other ways with that of the "unspeakable Turk," has much to learn from the latter in his dignity and reserve, and his majestic eloquence and martial prowess, when circumstances demand them.

LXXVII

A Vicious Circle.

If the characteristics of modern society can be taken as symptoms of its final evolution, and its organisation as the growth and outcome of the centuries, it would seem that we are evolving backward into a con-

dition of chaotic nature, and that, after all, the philosophy of Jean Jacques, so admired by George Eliot and Emerson that they dated their mental formation from his "Confessions," must be accepted as the ultimate word in the historical development of human civilisation. Our over-refinement has toppled over into barbarism. The vast progress of the centuries has been developing in a vicious circle. In pushing too feverishly forward to the goal of human perfection, we are plunging into primitive simplicities. "Naked and unashamed" is our condition. Hence the pessimism of the age, which is only another word for its realism. For just as your realist boasts that he only tells things as he finds them; that "all things are pure to the pure"; and that "Art must be pursued solely for the sake of Art," your pessimist declares that he is the only one who has the courage to face facts, and make them known to the world.

LXXVIII

Romanticism.

There was much solid truth in that word which Lowell spoke to Englishmen, on the occasion of the unveiling of the Coleridge memorial, when he warned them that, if they were to regain the intellectual altitude of their ancestors, they must give up the adoration of common-sense, and study the advantages of imagination and idealism. Men may decry romanticism in poem or novel, but it will be found in the end the source and secret of all those great regenerative processes which have saved the souls of nations from extinction. For as, in ordinary human nature, the tendency is earthwise and downward until it is elevated

by religion or philosophy, so in the polities of nations it will be found that, where materialism is dominant as a guiding and ruling spirit, evidences of degeneration speedily appear. And the process moves onward to destruction unless, by some tremendous force in literature or religion, the masses are flung backward and upward to the heights where imagination and the ideal reign triumphant. And the masters in romanticism are the supreme masters, — Shakspeare, Schiller, Calderon. These are the fountains of nationhood, as well as the masters in their craft.

LXXIX

Wanted — A Grand Vizier.

The Grand Vizier of Haroun was dead, and his place had to be filled. But here the Prince was at fault. Not one of his courtiers could he deem qualified to fill that exalted place. But he was compassionate as well as just; and he deemed it wise to allow his candidates to judge themselves, and by their judgment should they be judged. Some might deem the Prince's action cruel; some might think it contemptuous. But no, Al Raschid was just; and he had heard like an echo from afar off the words: "Out of thine own mouth shall I judge thee!" He appointed a day, therefore, on which the aspirants to the high dignity should meet him and declare their qualifications. They came, a mighty crowd, and the Prince was much afraid. Out of so many, but one could be chosen; and — the rest?

The first was a venerable man, of high stature, his great forked beard resting on his breast, and his garments tinkling with the little bells that hung on the fimbriæ of his vest and toga.

"I have come, great Prince," he said, "to claim the post of Grand Vizier to your Royal Highness, made vacant by the lamented death of your late adviser. Permit me to present to your Royal Highness the testimonials to my worth and honour."

Herewith he called a slave, who laboured up through the long apartment, sweating and toiling beneath a fearful burthen. This he deposited at the feet of his master, who unrolled it. The vast parchments, written all over in Hebrew and Greek, seemed to carpet the marble floor, and even to aspire to decorate the walls and ceiling.

The Prince looked on unconcernedly.

"These vast rolls, I presume," said the Prince, "are what men say of thee to thy face. Hast thou a record of what is said when thou art not present?"

The venerable man shook his head.

"No?" said the Prince. "Well, then, this is what men *say:* tell me what thou hast *done*. Thy years look many."

"I have read the Al-Koran two thousand and fifty times," said the sage, "and I have interpreted it to the multitude. My disciples have sate at my feet wondering. I have illuminated them, and they have carried the lamp of learning beyond the seas."

"Venerable Father, thou hast done well. Go in peace!" said the Prince.

The old man looked surprised, but bade his slave gather up the vast volume of parchment that filled the apartment. But the Prince stopped him.

"Nay, nay, venerable Father," he said. "Thy servant is weary even unto death. Go thou to thy house, and my slaves will follow with thy goods."

LXXX

When the aged man had departed, the second aspirant appeared. He, too, was old; yet the fires of inspiration seemed to burn in his eyes as he stood in a kind of awful majesty before his Prince.

A Learned Candidate.

"And thou," said the latter, calmly allowing his eyes to wander over the stranger's face and the cabalistic signs on his garments, "whence art thou? and what hast thou to say for thyself?"

"Knowest thou not," said the stranger, with awful and commanding dignity, "that I am the Oracle of Colchis, who see before and after, and trace the tortuous paths of men? From me nothing is hidden, nothing secret. I can probe all hearts and search all minds. The universe hath for me no enigma. The courses of the stars and their mysterious influences on human destinies are to me as the alphabet to a child; and there are no arcana beneath the earth that can escape my gaze. The most subtle things I can search out and reduce to their combinations, and the most complex and entangled things I can resolve into their elements. Test me, O Prince, if thou pleasest. What wouldst thou know? And earth and sky and sea shall yield up their secrets to me for thee!"

The Prince looked grave.

"Knowledge is a beautiful and worthy thing," he said. "It is a pearl of great price. Allah has been good to thee, venerable Father. But hath not some wise man said: 'My secret to myself!' Thou knowest too much, venerable Father! A king must have secrets even from his wife. Go thou, too, in peace! Allah be with thee!"

LXXXI

Then a third came, and advanced his claim to be Grand Vizier of the kingdom.

"Know thou, O great Prince," he said, "that I am he who hath rescued from the sands of Sahara a portion of your kingdom, and hath turned it from a desert into a smiling plain of plenty. By a strange and incommunicable secret I have poured the waters of life across the waste and burning sands, and redeemed from the barrenness of desolation a whole province, yea, even a kingdom. Where the sand-wastes curled beneath the south wind and were wreathed into pillars of destruction, the vine and the olive are now growing; and I have drunk of the grapes of Abara, where the nose of the camel sniffed in vain for water. My herds are as vast as the clouds that sail up on the south wind; and for every beast that chews the cud in the shelter of my palms there is a black Numidian in my household. My sceptre is dipped from sea to sea; and the hoofs of my horses tear the earth from the base of yonder Atlas to the Pyramids."

A Progressionist.

"Thou art great and mighty," replied the Prince Haroun; "why should'st thou seek the humility of a place in my household?"

"I would teach thee, O Prince," he replied, "to be great and powerful and beneficent. I would have thee do even as I; and conquer Nature instead of kingdoms."

"And for whom hast thou wrought all this vast and laborious work?" said the Prince. "Who are thy subjects, and how doth it profit them?"

"Subjects I have none to serve; slaves I have countless to obey. I am the lord who hath wrought and fashioned these things unto himself."

"Ah, then! Go in peace," said the Prince. "The eagle must not dwindle into the hawk; nor the leopard into the weasel. Allah be with thee!"

LXXXII

Haroun disguised.

Then Haroun al Raschid donned his disguise; and at night, when the oil-lamps flared in the angles of the streets, and all men were gathered around their hearths, he sallied forth with one humble follower, and passed rapidly through the deserted marts and beneath the silent and shining marbles of palaces, and came to a suburb of the city, where only the muleteers of the desert and the camel-drivers and the charcoal-burners lived. Here he paused and looked around and questioned. Many a rude answer, or ruder blow smote the Prince: but he was patient. At last, he came to where a prayerful and humble man was making his midnight orisons to the Highest; and, without invitation, the Prince and his follower entered. The holy man turned not away from his prayer. He was speaking to Allah; and besides Allah, there was no one else in the Universe. The Prince waited long, till the man had finished his prayers and risen up with the "Salem alaicom" on his lips. Then he bade his guests be seated, and was silent.

LXXXIII

"I would know, Father," said the Prince, "something of thee."

A Fakir.

"Man knoweth not aught of himself," replied the fakir; "speak to Allah."

"Thou art wise, O Father," replied the Prince. "The man who speaketh aught of himself to strangers, and all men are strangers unto each other, hath kept the empty scabbard and cast away the sword. But who are these?"

"This," said the fakir, pointing to a hairless, mangy cur, "is a beautiful dog, fit to be petted by the houris of the Prophet in Paradise; and this," pointing to a heap of rags, "is a fair virgin, outcast from her friends, and come hither to be a lamp unto my midnight, a rose unto my wilderness."

"Hast thou aught that we may eat?" said the Prince.

"Yea, even these," said the fakir, taking down a bundle of dried dates and figs that hung from the ceiling, and offering them to the Prince and his companion.

"I would see thee eat also," said the Prince.

And the man first handed a date to the dog, who devoured it greedily and bit his master's hand; and then he drew towards him the face of the girl. It was yellow and pitted, and the sightless eyes had pearls on them, like opals. He put into her mouth food, which she took querulously, and then, turning away, lapsed into indifference again. Then, and only then, the man ate a fig in silence.

LXXXIV

"I would ask thee three questions," said the Prince. "And first: when is man greatest?"

Three Questions.

"When he laughs amid his tears; when he suffers, and is silent; when he labours, although he foresees he never shall be paid," answered the fakir.

"Where is woman greatest?" asked the Prince.

"By the cradle of her child, by the couch of the dying, at the feet of God," said the man.

"When is God greatest?" asked the Prince.

"There are no degrees in God," said the man devoutly. "He is always greatest and best."

"Come!" said the Prince to his companion; "I have found him whom I sought."

LXXXV

Closing in.

The days are drawing in swiftly and surely. It is now quite dark at five o'clock. I can just see the empty garden-beds black against the green grass. The trees are colourless blots against the pallid sky. I try to think what a summer evening, only a few weeks ago had been at this very hour. I try to call up the long splendours of the sun, as they rested on tree and bush and house, and on the thick wall of verdure that stretches from horizon to horizon across the way. I try to summon up and picture the garden-beds beautiful and radiant with all their varied colours; the rose-trees nodding under their fragrant burthen; the gladioli in the borders, rainbow-tinted; the great stars of the asters and the heavy blossoms

of the dahlias; the sweet, pure, fragrant air; the swallows cutting it in every kind of segment. In vain! the present obliterates the past. Imagination cannot conquer reality. The mind-picture will not stay in face of the eye-picture which tells — here is darkness and cold and gloom, and the bareness of trees and the naked shrubs, and the silence broken by no song of bird, or hum of bee, only by the hoarse murmur of the waterfall far away, and the groan of a sick stag over there in the forest.

LXXXVI

I think this goes far towards explaining the feeble impression made upon us by death. There is really nothing so surprising as the callousness with which men regard death; and their strange indifference to their own relations with it. There is nothing on earth that should be more impressive than the sight of an open grave, with all its ghastly accompaniments of skulls and bones, and the poor effigy of clay in the long yellow box that is waiting for its own interment and consequent dissolution. One seems to hear the solemn voice and warning from the dead: *Hodie mihi! Cras tibi!* "To-day for me; to-morrow for you!" And yet the imagination, accentuated by the inevitable certainty, will not apply the lesson to ourselves. No! Here we are living, our pulses beating rhythmically, our breath coming freely, life running joyously throughout our veins. No! we cannot die. Death is not for us. We only grasp the present. Reason speaks warningly and infallibly. We dare not think that we can be exceptions to the universal law. But do

Impressions of Death.

we realise it? We cannot! The reality of our present existence obliterates the certainties of reason and the possibilities of imagination. And so, though "we look before and after, and pine for what is not," our lives are really centred in the present. We only make ourselves miserable for our memories and anticipations of a dream within a dream.

LXXXVII

Pierre Loti.

Bearing on this do you remember that awful chapter, "Profanation," in Pierre Loti's "Impressions," — of the cool indifference of the grave-digger when he sought for the remains of the four young Breton sailors who had been hastily interred, and found not coffins, with their still and secret burdens, but only fragments of blue cloth and a motley collection of human bones; of his French cynicism when he called for *baskets* to remove these human relics; of his momentary horror, when he found the red ribs and breast-bones of one poor lad a casket of white, writhing maggots; of his rapid recovery from such weak and culpable surprise, and his resumption of an attitude of cool indifference as he rubbed the larva from the under side of a piece of wood, and quietly shook aside into the earth the awful life that had been generated from the decomposition of these human forms; of the momentary horror of the spectator, and the immediate business-like indifference, as if those things had no concern for the living?

LXXXVIII

I know no equal to such Dantesque horrors, except that scene narrated so graphically by Trelawney, of the disinterment and cremation of the bodies of Williams and Shelley on the sands near Via Reggio. It is a piece of Homeric or Æschylean tragedy suddenly placed on the stage of events in the dawn of the nineteenth century, and carried out with a realism, an adaptation of pagan rites and ritual that no poetic artist, neither a Landor, nor a Swinburne, nor a Morris could have imagined as a central scene of epic or tragedy. Listen!

Disinterment of Williams.

"The first indication of their having found the body was the appearance of the end of a black silk handkerchief. — I grabbed this out with my stick, for we were not allowed to touch anything with our hands; then some shreds of linen were met with, and a boot with the bone of the leg and the foot in it. On the removal of a layer of brush-wood, all that now remained of my lost friend was exposed, — a shapeless mass of bones and flesh. The limbs separated from the trunk on being touched.

"'Is that a human body?' exclaimed Byron; 'why, it 's more like the carcass of a sheep, or any other animal, than a man; this is a satire on our pride and folly.'

"I pointed to the letters E. E. W. on the black silk handkerchief.

"Byron, looking on, muttered: 'The entrails of a worm hold together longer than the potter's clay of which man is made.'"

LXXXIX

So far for poor Williams. Let us pass on to Shelley's disinterment.

Shelley's Cremation.

"We were startled and drawn together by a dull, hollow sound that followed the blow of a mattock; the iron had struck a skull and the body was soon uncovered. Lime had been strewn on it; this, or decomposition, had the effect of staining it of a dark and ghastly indigo colour. Byron asked me to preserve the skull for him; but remembering that he had formerly used one as a drinking-cup, I was determined Shelley's should not be so profaned. After the fire was well kindled, we repeated the ceremony of the previous day; and more wine was poured over Shelley's dead body than he had consumed during his life. The heat from the sun and fire was so intense that the atmosphere was tremulous and wavy. The corpse fell open, and the heart was laid bare. The frontal bone of the skull, where it had been struck with the mattock, fell off; and as the back of the head rested on the red-hot bottom bars of the furnace, the brain literally seethed, bubbled, and boiled, as in a cauldron, for a very long time.

"Byron could not face the scene; he withdrew to the beach, and swam off to the *Bolivar*."

But is it Trelawney, or Leigh Hunt, that tells how the three friends, after such an awful and impressive scene, drove back to Pisa, and made the pine woods ring with their Bacchanalian songs and laughter?

XC

Grey Skies.

Clearly the Winter is upon us almost before we realise it. The light of the firmament has been shaded by the great Artist-Hand; and the skies from their altitudes of infinite azure have swooped down in a grey, leaden

dome of vapour, that sometimes hangs pendent, sometimes weeps with excess of moisture. The days have been drawn in gradually, but swiftly, as you would close up the folds of a camera, or the joints of a telescope. It seems only yesterday that we had twilight up to midnight; and then the dawn. Now it is night always, not so terrible as in Norway or the arctic regions, but yet a muffled and stifled daylight, and with it the curious silence that touches all things with a wand of mystery and an atmosphere of peace. Unwelcome? Oh, no! Thrice welcome rather! I think silence is a kind of worship — a solemn *latreia* in the great Temple of Nature. Wordsworth makes it a teacher, — a spiritual, unrobed, or disembodied priest, who, like Echo, daughter of Air and Tellus, might have been punished for his loquacity whilst in the flesh, and has now to preside over the solemnities of Nature with his finger on his lips. At any rate, he is a mighty teacher. One learns more from him, and deeper and more mysterious things, than from the senseless babble and clatter of mortals. And "silence is the custodian of righteousness," said the great doctor of Bethlehem. And a higher than he: "In silence and in hope shall be your strength."

XCI

Silence of Winter.

I appreciate the silence of Winter all the more from its contrast with the eternal and discordant noises of the Summer. Yes! even in this remote Irish village, far away from trains, which are the network of civilisation, and nestling in a deep well, sheltered by the impenetrable umbrage of woods and forests,

yea, even here, are noises as of Tophet or — Charing Cross. In the early morning a certain ragged philosopher, with the voice of a stentor, commences his day right under my window with wonderful speculations on things in general. He is instantly joined by another leisured professor of Do-Nothingism, who has contrived for many years, for his hair is grey, to solve successfully that problem, which is a puzzle to political economists, — how to get on on nothing a year. They commence an amiable discussion on things in general, — the things of yesterday and to-day, — yea, even the impenetrable future. Sometimes they wax wroth at the general deordination that seems to obtain throughout the universe; and the inexorable but wanton Fate, which will not allow them to set all things right. Sometimes the voice of the stentor rises into an emphasis, which I hope his guardian angel will forget; and the deep bass of his companion is broken in a sorrowful Jeremiad, which can only be terminated in one way. Seven o'clock strikes. Bells ring out, — convent bells for morning mass; mill bells for labour. The first public house is legally open, and I have a respite — a little peace.

XCII

Street Noises.

But instantly comes the creaking and jolting of donkey-carts of every size and shape to the creamery. Through some mischievous freak of fate, that creamery happens to be placed just round the corner, and within an appreciable distance of my house. Now I have a settled, deeply rooted conviction that no greater evil was ever invented for this island of unhappy desti-

nies than these creameries; and I repeat what I once heard a famous millionaire (no less than Mr. Carnegie) declare, in answer to some amusing story about betting, "If it were in my power I would give you, sir (I mean the inventor of creameries), two months of the hottest temperature you could bear in the next world." But there it is, and there it will remain. And during these three hours of the morning, a slow, solemn procession of donkey-carts, each with its solitary tankard of sweet milk, comes creeping down the high road, across the bridge and on to the creamery. And if you want to see the dreamy and mysterious Celt, here he is! and here she is! Slowly, at the rate of a mile every two hours, the procession files on. The donkeys, in a meditative mood, scarcely lift their feet, and seem to proceed in a kind of shuffle, ears bent down, brain dreaming, I suppose, on unlimited hay. And meditatively, dreamily, solemnly, the drivers hang listlessly on the cart, looking nowhere in particular, only suffering themselves to be led by the instincts of their beasts. And very often it is a young girl, her shawl wrapped around her thick hair, her chin resting gently on her hand, her eyes cast down, dreaming, dreaming, dreaming!

XCIII

By some occult but general rule, however, they all seem to wake up just as they come right under my window; and with furious beatings of their donkeys, and fierce cries of "G'won! G'won! G'won!" sometimes emphasised with a curse, they force the animals into a gallop. The noise and clatter are maddening. Sometimes I

Creameries.

think of what the Sage of Chelsea would say if he were here in my study. How he would invoke the Eternities and the Immensities! How he would invent from his too copious resources of unbridled and unlicensed speech, epithets for the hated Irish! And how he would philosophise, and spill all the vials of his wrath on the narrow, mammonish, materialistic spirit that compels these farmers to send in the richness and fat of their flocks and herds to swell the exchequer of an English speculator, whilst consumptive girls here in the village cannot get a glass of milk to wet their parched and splintered lips; and mothers are compelled to poison their infants with black acrid tea because the farmers, for a little profit, send every glass of milk from their dairies to swell the tankards that pass under my window every morning to the great condensed-milk factory six miles away. O mad prophet of the unbridled tongue! there is at least one who, differing from you in everything else, would cheerfully join in your philippics here.

XCIV

City Noises.

And then, all day long, comes the vast army of idlers of every rank, who apparently have nothing else to do but to drive harassed beasts up and down before my door. The carts appear to be all empty; but they drive and drive, and rattle and creak over broken stones and crossings, and I say: "What superb nerves these fellows have! They seem to enjoy the hideous clatter; or is it that they are narcotised by that thick, oily, black tobacco that every one appears to smoke? The cracking of whips, an amusement in

which Germans seemed to find great delight, used to drive Schopenhauer almost mad. The barrel-organ and the crowing of cocks were the especial torments of Carlyle. Clearly there is nothing for it but to wrap up in cotton-wool the "genus irritabile vatum"; and put them in sound-proof chambers, and get the "profanum vulgus" to cease forever their profane noises. But how then shall we carry out Emerson's prescription for literary men and especially women, to spend all their years after sixty in some city? He argues wisely and deeply as usual; and there is much sense in his theory that the country life is only suited when the faculties are fresh, but that when they grow hebetated and weak they need the stimulus of human society to reanimate them. But the noise and tumult and dust and clangour of a great city — is not the price too much for the transient gain?

XCV

Yet "Back to the land! Back to the land!" is the cry, and the opportune and legitimate cry of all social reformers or economists who have the interests of nations at heart. World-Problems. Here in Ireland, this little rugged rock in the North Atlantic, we are prone to think that our problems and difficulties are our own peculiar property which, except for sympathetic assistance, should have no concern for the world at large. We are so insular in our ideas that we do not see that just as we shape the characteristics of other conquered races, so are we working out the same issues. Our little grievances, which English statesmen laugh at, are in reality not Irish problems, but *world-problems*. If the quadrature of the circle could be solved in Ire-

land, it would affect the universe. And if we can solve the labour-problem, the problem of taxation, the land problem, we shall solve them not only for our own benefit, but for humanity at large, and for generations yet unborn. Under all that is undesirable and unendurable in politics, I see humanity struggling upward and outward towards great and lasting issues. But I think it is a mistake to imagine that Acts of Parliament can lift a race, as if by hydraulic power, from the marsh to the mountain; and I think history testifies that it is not by Persic laws, Draconian codes, Justinian Institutes, or Codes Napoleon that the best elements of humanity have been developed, and the race, or nations composing the race, have been placed in the path of freedom and progress.

XCVI

Their Solution.

For example, whilst we are deploring the exodus of our people from their native land, this chronic hemorrhage that has been going on for nearly sixty years, we find a similar exodus from every country in Europe, save France. Whilst we complain of the fatal tendency of our people to flee the land and congregate in great cities, we are reminded that in certain English counties the land is so deserted that its owners are glad to have their estates occupied merely for payment of rates. Whilst we deplore the compulsory celibacy of our young men and women, and the growing disinclination to assume the responsibilities of marriage, we are reminded by advices from America and England that what we thought a local and limited evil is in reality as wide as the earth. But all this should be an encouragement, not a

deterrent, to put forth all our energies, and, by solving here on this little island our insular and local problems, pave the way for the solution of the wider and more intricate problems that are exercising the faculties of humanitarians from the rising to the setting sun. And there is but one solution, — the creation of new and wholesome ideas by means of broad and liberal systems of education.

XCVII

On reading over to-day the "Lady of Shalott" for my little children in school, and demanding an explanation from them of the poem, which is clearly allegorical, I saw, as in a flash of light, what deep meaning was hidden in the poet's mind. I cannot help thinking that the idea must have been suggested to Tennyson by these lines of Shakspeare, which Goethe was so fond of quoting, — The Lady of Shalott.

> "We are such stuff as dreams are made of,
> And our little life is rounded by a sleep, —"

just as "Mariana in the Moated Grange" was suggested by the lines in "Measure for Measure." And the meaning appears to be that, for certain dreamers or poets, it is best to regard the earth and its mortals as passing shadows, and to see them only in the mirror of fancy and imagination, for it is death to high hopes and dreams to turn away from the shadow and face the terrible reality.

> "She hath heard a whisper say,
> A curse is on her if she stay
> To look down to Camelot.
> She knows not what the curse may be,
> And so she weaveth steadily,
> And little other care hath she,
> The Lady of Shalott."

Precisely! Poets and philosophers and dreamers must keep steadily at their task, "weaving by night and day the magic web," and never turning to watch in the bald and bare realities of life the replica of the fairy images wrought by the spell of imagination in the mirror of their own fancies.

XCVIII

The Poets' Mirror.

Hence, one finds that every poet who turns away from his magic mirror and stares boldly at the realities of human existence becomes a confirmed pessimist. The genial Shakspeare, whose high forehead and calm face seemed the very symbols of placid content with himself and the world, became, we know from several passages in his dramas, and from all his sonnets, a soured and disappointed man. Tennyson abandoned his sunny creations — his Orianas and Doras and Claribels — for the gloomy pessimism of "Locksley Hall: Sixty years after," and "Despair," and "Maud." Dante gnashed his teeth at the world. Browning was an optimist, because he never saw things in the magic mirror; but face to face from his early manhood, in the happy realism of social life, he saw men and women as they are, and was never compelled to exchange the aerial sprites of poetic fancy for the Calibans of ordinary life. No man can be an optimist after fifty, unless he has been wise enough never to gaze into the mirror of youthful fancies and hopes, but to see and watch from the beginning the stern if sombre realities of every-day existence. It is a sad day in every human life when it can be said:

"Out flew the web and floated wide,
The mirror cracked from side to side.
'The curse is come upon me,' cried
The Lady of Shalott."

XCIX

Poets and Society.

Hence poets are quite out of place at five o'clock teas and other social gatherings. We look to them for some demonstration of their high calling, — some manifestation of our belief, and possibly their conviction, that they are not as other men. We like to see a Wordsworth, clothed in his shepherd's plaid, and walking in royal solitude along the summits of his Cumberland or Westmoreland hills; we do not want to see him gnawing raisins behind green lamp-shades in some commonplace London drawing-room. Shelley, in his nautilus-craft, sailing before the wind along the shores of the Gulf of Spezzia, and wondering whether the next moment will not reveal to him the great secret, is quite well placed for the poet of "The Skylark" and "The Cloud." We hate to think of him watching *Constantia* singing; or practising pistol-shots with Byron. Keats, too, we can understand, dreaming out on Hampstead Heath, or by the blue waves at Teignmouth. But the Keats, revealed in his insane letters to Fanny Brawne, is a terrible disillusion. And Browning — the Browning of "Saul" and "Abt Vogler," and the colossal poems that a pigmy generation cannot yet, even when standing on tiptoe, measure — think of Browning standing, like a gawkish school-boy, with Mrs. Carlyle's tea-kettle in his hand! And think of *our* shame when we hear him rebuked for his awkwardness, and petulantly ordered to put it down!

C

Carlyle.

And Carlyle himself, how fearfully and terribly he lost by coming down from the Holy Mountain and mixing with the common herd in the streets! Had he remained in the lonely seclusion of Craigenputtock, and issued from thence, such epics as *Sartor*, we should not be forced to think of him, as Herbert Spencer and Mill found him, a garrulous and angry monologist, intolerant of interruption and argument, and seeking in his Babel of languages some stony expletive, harder than the other, to fling at the head of an antagonist. It is true that No. 5 Cheyne Row, Chelsea, is still an object of interest to the world; but it is not as the Mecca of a prophet, but merely as the theatre of such human weakness and marital unhappiness as the world had seldom seen. A voice from the desert or the mountain would have been listened to by the present generation and echoed down along the corridors of Time. But who can say, that the *Jeremiads* and *Woes* of Chelsea are hearkened to by a people that to-day are more materialistic and sunken than when the voice from Craigenputtock first awakened them to a sense of their political and moral degradation?

CI

Hawthorne.

The most reserved, and therefore, the most revered of modern writers, was probably Nathaniel Hawthorne. There is something very beautiful in his silent and upward struggles through poverty and adverse circumstances to independence. No querulousness, no

railing at fortune, nor at men, from whom, indeed, as seems to be always the case with such gentle and lofty spirits, he received but scant consideration; but silent work, carried out always in obedience to that silent behest of genius to persevere through faith in one's own unacknowledged powers. And then, when triumph came, the meek enjoyment of the slender competence the world flings to such benefactors, and the same reticence and reserve that characterised his hidden and early struggles. Yes! the contemplation of such silent and lofty spirits is invigorating in the enervation that will come from the loud noises of a blatant world. And his end was quite in harmony and beautiful unison with his life. Gently, without a murmur, or even a sigh, he sank into the dreamless sleep; and his friend, deceived by his placidity and motionless aspect, did not know and could not tell at what time sleep ended and death began.

CII

So! it is Winter. The beautiful frost-foliage is on my windows in the morning, — flowers and leaves, wrought out in all manners of such exquisite curves and interlacings that no human art could possibly approach it. No finest pencil, or sharpest chisel, held in the hands of a Michael Angelo or a Phidias could trace on canvas or marble anything at all approaching the exquisite tracery, the multitudinous lines, the sweeps and segments of circles wrought in a few hours by the invisible spirit of the air on a little moisture on the glass. Alas! that it is evanescent, like all beautiful things. I breathe softly on the

Winter.

window-pane, and lo! 't is gone. The secret artist withdraws his handiwork, and departs. It is a hint at perfection, a suggestion of the absolute, which Nature is forever giving us to remind us of "The Beauty, ever ancient, ever new," that lies beyond the visible, and shall be revealed when matter is no more, but only the Form, the Archetype, the Vision and the Spirit stand out against the background of eternity.

CIII

O Altitudo.

Like Jean Paul's wandering spirit through the stars, the Infinitely Great, — when he sank down terrified at the awful revelations, and besought the Angel of the Lord to spare him any further revelations as too overwhelming for a human intellect, — I confess to a feeling of dread of examining too minutely God's second revelation, the Infinitely Little. It is again a succession of wonders, minute but significant; and these crowd upon the human mind that investigates them with such amazing prodigality that there seems no release from their terrifying and seemingly interminable succession, but to lay down one's book, and cease to investigate further. On a long piece of mica, that founder of crystallography, the Abbé Haüy says:

> "We have been able to detach from it a layer that reflected a beautiful clear blue, which is a sign of extreme tenuity. Having calculated the thickness of this layer, we found it equal to the forty-three millionth of a millimetre, which supposes that from a piece of mica one millimetre thick, we can slice off more than 23,000 separated lamina."

And of the crystalline drawings and pencillings on my window-pane Professor Tyndall could write:

"Let us imagine for a moment that stones are gifted with a power of locomotion, that they attract and repel each other, and that by virtue of these attractions and repulsions they dispose themselves in such order as to form houses and streets in the most perfect symmetry, would we not be astounded at such phenomena? Observe those stars of ice which form on your window-pane during winter: viewed by the microscope in their complete formation each of them has six rays; one would say they were flowers with six petals, and each molecule takes up its place in this type rigorously hexagonal."

Alas! that such a lover of "the fairy tales of Science" could not, like old Sir Thomas Browne, utter with faith, "*O Altitudo!*"

Part II

WINTER

Part II

WINTER

Section I

I

One advantage of the wintry season is that it draws in and concentrates thought and interest on domestic and homely things. Summer is the period of externation. Our ideas with ourselves expand and travel abroad. Everything seems to open up, — the heavens, light, the length of day, the sun, the trees, the flowers, the very insects. These latter form a world in themselves; and we wonder where they lay hidden and *perdus* during the long Winter; and how did they, frail things, protect themselves against bitter and biting frosts, which killed birds and plants and flowers without remorse. Yet here they come forth, — some as garden beauties, some as garden pests; some extremely beautiful, some extremely ugly; that is, if there be such a thing as ugliness at all in anything which Omnipotent and Eternal Beauty has constructed. But now Nature goes into retreat. The days narrow to a slit of twilight; the skies draw down and weigh upon the atmosphere, which chokes and blinds us; all living things seem to have vanished, as if by magic, from the flower-beds and shrubs and walks of my garden. And we, too, become narrowed and contracted from all external interests and occupations; and we notice and watch and philosophise about things which a few weeks ago seemed to us of little or merely pass-

The Narrowing of Winter.

ing interest. Perhaps it is but the physical theory applied to thought, that heat has an expansive influence and that cold contracts.

II

Lu and *Ju*.

Lu and Ju are kittens, about three or four months old. They differ much in appearance, but very little in their habits. Lu is quite angelic, if I may dare use the expression. Her white, soft, downy breast, her meek eyes, her little pink nose and tongue, speak nothing but gentleness and playfulness. Ju is more robust, and her grey fur, roughened sometimes in play or anger, and her eager eyes, give one the idea of closer relationship with the striped terror of Indian and Bengal jungles. They seem to enjoy life, climbing up lace curtains to their serious detriment, scratching the damask of chairs and sofas, tearing out by clawfuls the fur of the hearth-rug, chasing each other under tables and chairs, rolling over on the carpet, and clawing at each other in sportive playfulness. They are rather exclusive, too. Charlie, my white English terrier, a very lively and jocund individual, has made several advances and been rudely repulsed. He has stood on his hind legs and gracefully pawed the air, rolled over on his back, and performed other gymnastics, evidently with the intention of being allowed to share the amusements of the kittens. But no! He has been ignominiously repelled. To all his blandishments there is but one response, — a hiss, a spit, and a quick, fierce dash of a paw that might seriously injure his optics. In this peremptory refusal of all

advances, Lu is as fierce as Ju, and Ju is as fierce as Lu. Otherwise, and in all the other details of life, the kittens manifest a spirit of fraternity that would suit the dreams of a Communard.

III

But a few days ago, in an unhappy moment for her own ultimate felicity, Lu killed a mouse. It was her first, and she was very proud of the achievement. But she was not going to keep it in a museum. She wanted to eat it. Unfortunately Ju wanted the same. Lu strenuously and emphatically refused, claiming the prey for her lawful prize. She had seized it and killed it. Therefore, by all law, human and feline, it was hers, and no one had a right to interfere. But Ju had an idea also, borrowed from certain moralists, that she had a right at least to deprive Lu of possession if she could do so by violence, fraud, feint, or sleight of hand, diplomacy, or other method. Hence war has been formally proclaimed and is now raging. The fraternity born in the common cradle is broken up; the sports of childhood are set aside for the sterner work of warfare; the angelic Lu hides her prey like a burglar, and burrows in dark corners, growling over it, little beast as she is; and Ju watches from secret places like any assassin, pounces on the incautious Lu, rolls her over, and tries to murder her; whilst, all day long, the noise of battle — growls and screams, and hurried scampering to and fro, and rude encounters — have taken the place of those gentle amenities that hitherto had marked the unruffled progress of happy kitten-life.

War proclaimed.

IV

The Higher Humanity.

One smiles pityingly, and rather contemptuously, on these pranks of the lower creation, until it is suddenly asked, Wherein does the higher humanity differ? Put human beings for Lu and Ju; put a piece of paper, a coin, a bit of polished charcoal, a square of earth, a riband, in place of the mouse, — and is not the fraternal spirit, too, rapidly changed into the fratricidal? How men's faces harden and grow thin; how the light dies from their eyes, and the fierce animal-cunning look takes its place; how suddenly the gentle purrings and cooings and dainty little amenities of life are set aside, and the hard, metallic judicial or military note is assumed; and how each creature seeks to hide his treasure and bury it in a bank, and lock up his securities so that no human eye may see them, for he knows that covetousness and rapacity are everywhere, and that he must conceal his treasures or fight for them! And statesmen governing mighty empires, — how they, too, have to watch, and prevaricate, and lie boldly, and bury deeply, and speculate wildly, and steal unblushingly, to safeguard their little possessions! Put bayonets for claws, the thunder of cannon and the rattle of musketry for the angry growl, and a piece of barren island for a mouse, and you have brought down the statesman, whose word rules hemispheres, to the level of Lu and Ju.

V

Charlie has heroically offered his services as ally, or peacemaker between the hostile forces. He pretends, canine diplomat as he is, to be quite indifferent about the *spolia opima*, around which the battle is raging. He affects the lordly indifference of a superior being, of one who has copious treasures of his own, and a plethora of good things in general, in order that his services, given generously and gratuitously, without hope of favour or reward, may be accepted. Charlie, who cannot see the flutter of a wing in the garden, or the faintest sign of animal life without being seized with the fierce fury of a murderer, now assumes the rôle of peacemaker. A mouse, — a mere mouse, already half consumed and badly mangled, — he turns away in sorrowing contempt for such a thing. Has he not his own prey and booty in the stable? Did he not kill that young, brown rat, that was making such criminal raids upon the oat-bin yesterday; and has he not as many trophies as yonder bloated spider with all his gallows-victims around him? Oh, no! Charlie, in offering his services as ally or intermediary, is above suspicion. Besides, there is canine honour to be maintained. And honour above all things! *O canis improbe! O caeca hominum pectora!* And oh, Charlie! that much-abused motto, *Noblesse oblige!*

An Ally.

VI

Ju has conquered! She caught Lu in an incautious moment, when she was sadly unprepared (too full a sense of security, I expect, or too much reliance on that astute

A Machiavel.

statesman, Charlie, who had completely succumbed to her charms), rolled her over again and again, snatched the fragmentary prize and incontinently ate it. Lu is just now caterwauling and making ineffectual appeals for sympathy around the house. Ju is on my hearth-rug, either in a state of apoplectic coma from too much mouse-meat, or in a state of sad depression from the consummation of her crime. Remorse is snapping at the heels of ill deeds. Charlie is sitting beyond her, looking at the fire in a sad manner. He is overwhelmed by the consciousness of feline depravity. There is a melancholy pity on his fine features as he looks sometimes on the penitent criminal beneath him, and then at the fire. Once or twice he caught my eye, as I watched them both; and he looked at me as if there were some link of a common superiority and general immunity from universal depravity between us. It was flattering, but then I thought I saw the fellow winking with his off-eye at the fire. I cannot make him out. He is a Machiavelli in furs; a Talleyrand without an emperor to practice his wiles upon. I am getting rather suspicious of Charlie. He fawns on me, thrusts his nose into my hand, professes eternal fidelity and affection. But yesterday, when I pushed away a bone with my foot, he nearly bit me. And this affectation of virtue! I don't like it.

VII

Remorse.

Yes! I see it is remorse that is agitating Ju,—not the dyspeptic melancholy of too much mouse-meat. She goes about sadly, clings to the hearth-rug when she can, and refuses to play even with her ally, Charlie. To-day

she looked so miserable, so utterly broken-hearted, that I commiserated her, and not wishing to hurt her feelings by making a direct application of the subject to her case, I read aloud the following passage from a brilliant lecture by his Grace the Duke of Argyll, K. C., delivered before the students who had assembled in the London Mansion, as one of a course of university extension addresses. Charlie stood up to leave, but I bade him remain. I think he suspected that I was going to be personal in my remarks. Nothing was further from my mind. I hate personalities. I think there is nothing more unpleasant in life than personal remarks, if I except personal explanations. I have a few acquaintances who are always explaining. I hate to hear their knock, and to be informed that they would like to see me on business. I feel like the Eton boy who is told, "the Master wishes to see you in his room." I always know what's coming:

"A fine day!"

"Yes!"

"Very cold, however!"

"Yes, very cold. I think the glass is running down." A pause.

"You won't mind my speaking to you about a little matter—" Oh, dear!

But Ju and Charlie are waiting.

VIII

Thus saith his Grace, the Duke of Argyll:

"There is one other universal fact connected with past history to which, for a few minutes, I wish to attract your attention, and it is this: that man, ever since we have had any record of him, has been a

An Academic Speech.

fighting animal." (*A gentle murmur of applause from Charlie; Ju wakes up.*) "Let not my fair friends whom I have the honour to address, think I am bringing before them something which belongs to a coarse philosophy." (*Charlie nudges Ju, who looks slightly offended.*) "Let us look facts in the face. In all science we have to deal with facts, and we ought not to put them aside for the sake of fancy or sentiment. It is unquestionably true that war and conquest have been universal facts in the history of the world. I believe I am correct in saying that there is not a single nation of any power now existing in the world, that has not been founded on war or conquest." ("*Bow-wow*," *from Charlie, which is the canine equivalent of Hear! Hear! The Chair demands silence.*) "So it has been all over the world, and it is so at the present moment. We are even now perpetually seizing and occupying countries which have a native population, and whom we do not actually conquer only because they are too weak to fight. The world in this respect has not changed, ladies and gentlemen, — not one whit. I know nothing more curious in recent history than the fact that, in the great war between Germany and France when France was defeated, Germany seized a little bit of her territory, — Alsace; and she was severely blamed for doing so." (*Scornful laughter from Ju and Charlie.*) "I said to all my friends at that time, 'Do you think the world has so completely changed; that great wars and great conquests are to go on, and that the conquering nation is never to take what all other nations have hitherto taken, portions of territory for their own possession?' There was no answer to that." (*Bow! wow! wow! from Charlie.*)

IX

Ju stretched herself and yawned deeply. The crisis had passed. There will be no *felo de se* this time. Her conscience is at rest. She has withdrawn formally the *Nimmer und Nimmermehr* about which her mind was sadly revolving. Here, in the higher human species, and in the very apogee of its progress towards perfection, are both precept and examples — the credentials for future infinite mouse-eating and feline rapacities. Might is right! All human moralities point that way; and we, of the lower levels, wild or domesticated, must not dare presume to pitch our moral conduct on a higher plane than that of our great superiors. I don't know what Lu will think of his Grace the Duke of Argyll; but she, too, has now *carte blanche* to take and keep whatever lies in her power. It is primitive morality, but simple. And oh! how it does solve all the metaphysical questions about free will, and the rights of States to punish; and capital punishment, and death penalties, and reformation of criminals. Surely, if it had no other merit, this alone, that it stopped forever the wranglings of philosophers, would justify it. Dante has written a *Divina Commedia;* Alfred Austin a *Human Tragedy;* Balzac a *Comèdie Humaine;* alas! there is no room for more.

The Crisis over.

X

My poor boy-patient died this morning. His face had become fearfully deformed in the progress of the dread disease, epithelioma. Even the profile, hitherto untouched, began at last to be affected, like the other;

Science and Death.

the right eye bulged forth; the malady grew down and into the throat, until at last he could swallow no food, and became emaciated like a tuberculous patient. And just as he died I took up the morning paper and read that an indubitable cure for cancer had been discovered in France; and that Pasteur's assistant in Paris had accepted it, and was already working wonderful cures on his patients. One is slightly incredulous about such reports, until they are put beyond doubt by repeated and genuine experiment. Yet we are at liberty to admire this unquenchable desire of Science to grapple with its great antagonist, Death, although victory must remain always with the latter. It is the dread picture of Laocoön and the serpents that is presented to our imagination when we see the priests of Science grappling with the inevitable and the all-conquering. There really is nothing for humanity but to accept its fate.

> "Out, out, brief candle!
> Life 's but a walking shadow. A poor player
> That frets and struts his hour upon the stage,
> And then is heard no more!"

XI

Irish Turf or African Veldt.

It was a dreary, clammy, wet, and dismal day, as we bore his poor remains across the stretch of country to a mountain hollow, where the churchyard nestled under great trees, as if the earth alone were not able to hide its beloved dead. Great sheets of grey rain swept across the landscape, hid the mountains, filled the valleys, clothed the naked branches with pearls, and replenished the dry channels, where all the Autumn the brown and red and green sandstone

pebbles and boulders lay naked to the sight. We took him up through deep cuttings in the hills, down through pleasant valleys, until at last we deposited the sacred burden in earth consecrated in the memories and devotions of the faithful for over a thousand years. It was a lonely place, and we the mourners were few. One or two people from the straggling hill-village looked out, and seeing something that broke the grey monotony of their lives, sauntered down after us to the graveyard, and raised their hats as the last prayers were repeated. Then all departed, and he was alone. "Well," said some one, penetrated with a sense of the loneliness and desolation of the place, and the sad surcease of a life that was just breaking out into such promise of great things, "it is better to rest here than in a stony grave out on an African veldt."

XII

How strange is that cry of Rest! Rest! Rest! the prayer and the hope of humanity. Young and old alike look forward to it; the former, as the concomitant of age and the reward of life's labour; the latter, in death, the final sleep and stillness for mind and body. We place the magic initials on our obituary notices of our departed ones; we write the full words, *Requiescat in pace*, as the final farewell when the grave hides them from our sight. Customs differ in different countries; but I must say I was inexpressibly touched on noticing in the German and Swiss cemeteries, particularly over the graves of little children, the little poetic prayers:

Ruhe Sanft.

"*Ruhe Sanft!*"

and beneath, as the last word of immortal hope blending with the final benediction:

"*Auf Wiedersehen!*"

Goethe, the scientific Pagan, omits the latter word of Christian hope in the famous lines he wrote in the grotto or summer house at Weimar:

"Ueber allen Gipfeln
Ist Ruh;
In allen Wipfeln
Spürest du
Kaum einen Hauch;
Die Vögelein schweigen im Walde;
Warte nur, balde
Ruhest du auch."[1]

XIII

A huge bunch of chrysanthemums — white as curds, bronze as dying fireflames, scarlet, yellow, pink — was on my writing-desk when I returned; and strange to say, almost the first lines my eyes fell upon when after dinner I turned up the flame of my lamp and began to read were these:

The Souls of Flowers.

"Flowers have souls, as well as animals, all spreading and expanding and germinating upwards even to the soul of man."

[1] "Over every mountain-height
Slumber broods;
Scarcely a zephyr light
Stirs in the woods
One leafy crest.
The song-bird sleeps on the bough;
Wait a little, and thou,
Thou, too, shalt rest."

And these words were spoken by the strangest lips and in the strangest place; yea, even by the lips of Napoleon the heartless, and on the rock of St. Helena. Think of the lips of bronze that thundered over Europe for twenty years, and condemned at least two millions of his race to death, uttering such a piece of poetry; and in his barren cage where sultry siroccos and the sharp teeth of ocean hurricanes had worn away vegetation even to the stony surface, except where in valleys and hidden places a willow might grow, and water spring, and grasses wave, as in that lonely spot where, after six years of mental and physical torture, the little frame of granite and iron was laid to rest.

XIV

How much more appropriately sounds a similar conception from the mind of the poet, who extorted the admiration of the bowelless conqueror after the battle of Jena. "*Voilà un homme!*" And how sweetly come the words in the native German:

A Holy Riddle.

> "Alle Gestalten sind ähnlich, und keine gleichet der andern;
> Und so deutet das Chor auf ein geheimes Gesetz,
> Auf ein heiliges Räthsel." [1]

A holy riddle! So it is. And it may be expressed thus: "What is it in Nature that not only develops the instinct, the passion, for new creations, but makes that instinct also develop itself in forms of varied and entrancing beauty?" And whence her tremen-

[1] "All the forms are resembling, and no one is like to another;
And thus does the chorus point to a mysterious law,
A *holy riddle.*"

dous prolific sources whence proceed not only new creations, but such an infinite variety of beautiful forms that one is bewildered by such munificence, such prodigality, such infinite resources for producing form and colour and detail, absolutely perfect and flawless? Look at these chrysanthemums on my table! I am bewildered with their beauty.

XV

A Mimosa.

I doubt if the fertile imagination of any poet ever invented such a pretty little story as that which a certain naturalist tells us of a mimosa and a little child somewhere in South America. This beautiful plant had become so accustomed to be approached and touched by the young daughter of the house that it never shrank from her, but like a sentient thing, like a bird or a favourite dog, allowed itself to be fondled and fed by the gentle fingers of the child. A gentleman visitor, also a botanist, whilst thoroughly recognising the sensibility of these wonderful creations, was yet incredulous about its dumb perception of the child's affection. The matter was put to the test. The gentleman was challenged to approach the plant with all caution. He did so. But when he came within a yard of the mimosa, it shyly drew in its petals and closed them fast, just as an oyster snaps at the touch, or the garden-snail withdraws its feelers and horns. After an interval it opened up again, and stretched out its petals. Then the child was bade approach. Not only did the plant remain quite open, but it allowed the gentle fingers to smooth and rub the petals and twist them hither and thither without the least sign of shrinking or of fear.

XVI

Yet, whilst that feeling remains uppermost in my mind that these pretty things have at least sensibility, it brings with it a hideous reflection. These flowers on my table are soulless; for these most beautiful fronds and leaves are the decapitated heads of winter beauties which the scissors would not spare. Already I can perceive the process of decay. They have been ruthlessly guillotined, and must perish. And as I watch them by my lamplight, and wonder at their beautiful petals and corolla, a sudden resemblance flashes up. I see a fair, sweet face, crowned with a corona of white powdered hair, carried on the top of a pike through the streets of Paris. It is the head of the youthful Princesse de Lamballe, who has been torn from the side of the unhappy Queen, ruthlessly murdered, insulted in death in an unspeakable manner, finally cut into small pieces, which were scattered over the pavements of Paris. One, more brutal than the others, has brought her head on his lance, and paraded it beneath the windows of the Duke of Orléans. Philippe Egalité rises from his dinner-table and smiles at the ghastly trophy. It was then borne to the Temple, and paraded beneath the windows of Louis XVI. A commissioner calls him to the window to see it. Another tries to prevent him. The cut flower is carried away to be trampled beneath the feet of demons.

Guillotined.

XVII

A Meteoric Shower.

Last night we had a most glorious meteoric shower. I heard the children "making wishes" outside my windows, and concluded from their exclamations that the mighty and mysterious heavens were producing once again, and at their stated times, a magnificent spectacular display. So it was. Swiftly and beautifully as arrows shot from an invisible bow by the hands of some mighty Archer, the tenuous lines were flung forth, and after trailing a path of light across the heavens, sank soundless into the womb of Infinity. At one time they seemed to cross each other in irregular lines like summer lightning; and apparently they were performing a zigzag dance in the heavens. But I had seen something about their being focussed in origin from some central point; and it was then quite easy to perceive that, swift and sudden as was their flight, the vast projectiles did issue from the centre of the constellation Andromeda. Each meteoric flash lit up not only the heavens, but the earth, with a pale blue light; and the whole effect was pretty, but not sublime. The one feature in the great display that was sublime was the sudden swallowing up of such vast, ignited, metallic masses in the awful deserts of the universe.

XVIII

A Great Line.

Suddenly all kinds of star-lines in star-poetry shot through my mind, but their presence there was as evanescent as the meteors themselves. All but one line of

transcendent beauty from the "Midsummer Night's Dream":

> *"And certain stars shot madly from their spheres*
> *To hear the sea-maid's music."*

That line hung crystalline and liquid in the night of memory as the planet Jupiter that looked down upon these foolish meteors as if nailed to the Infinite; and, as I watched the tenuous flashes, and thought over the beauties of that line, — the alliteration so delicate and unpronounced, the short syllables that marked the swift flight of the stars, and the broad, smooth vowels of "sea-maid's music," I thought for the thousandth time that there is but one great enigma in literature, and that is Shakspeare.

XIX

For how can the imagination compass the fact that the same hand which wrote that line, and others, such as,

Contrasts.

> "or Heaven's cherubin, horsed
> Upon the sightless couriers of the air;"

or these:

> "spirits are not finely touched
> But to fine issues; nor nature never lends
> The smallest sample of her excellence
> But, like a thrifty goddess, she determines
> Herself the glory of a creditor, —
> Both thanks and use,"

did also actually write the riverside tavern obscenities that deface so much of his verse that one must walk with a lantern, as on the pavement of

an Oriental city by night, lest the foot should stumble into unnameable horrors? It is altogether inconceivable, impossible, except on one theory, that the man, Shakspeare, stands, like ancient Homer, for a multitude of singers, some sweet, some hoarse, some vile, some sublime; that he was a practical eclectic, using his powers of adaptation and selection with marvellous dexterity, here and there adjusting to some great historic scene some mighty speech or philosophic monologue, caught from the lips of Verulam or Pembroke, and again descending to the tavern to seize for comedy the wit and repartee of minds teeming with all kinds of salacious abominations. "Airs from heaven" and "blasts from hell" were never seen in such combination in any other poet.

XX

Shakspeare and the Sea.

It is not a little singular, but it is very significant, that Shakspeare has not said one kind word about the sea. He seems to be particularly uneconomic of the word "ruffian," when he speaks of winds or surges.

> "And in the visitation of the winds,
> Who take the *ruffian* billows by the top,
> Curling their monstrous heads and hanging them
> With deafening clamour in the slippery clouds."

And in "Othello":

> "Methinks the wind has spoke aloud at land;
> A fuller blast ne'er shook our battlements;
> If it hath *ruffianed* so upon the sea,
> What ribs of oak, when mountains melt upon them,
> Can hold the mortise?"

And in several places we meet such expressions as:

"The rough seas that spare not any man."

"The deep-mouthed sea."

"In cradle of the rude, imperious surge."

The deep love, and the mysterious longings, and the suggestions of eternity and infinity, and the contrast between its intransience and this fleeting life, and all the tender sounds and aspects of the sea seem to have been completely unknown to him.

XXI

But this feature is common to all poets with Shakspeare, prior to the nineteenth century. The Bible always speaks with a certain dread of the sea — of its monsters, its leviathans, its strength, its fury. The Homeric epithets "loud-resounding," "wine-coloured," suggest an alien and perilous element. One expression in Dante, very tender and very sweet, seems to come closer to modern sentiment than anything to be found in his predecessors or contemporaries. It is the well-known line in the *Purgatorio*:[1]

The Love of the Sea.

"L'alba vinceva l'ôra mattutina
Che fuggia innanzi, sì chè di lontano
Conobbi il *tremolar della marinà*."

There is some pride in the sea, as England's exclusive domain, in the eighteenth-century English poets. But there is no hint as yet of that deep,

[1] Canto I., 115–118.

almost uninterpreted love of the sea, which seems to have held captive every poet that sang in the nineteenth century, from Shelley to Swinburne. I say "uninterpreted," because it is quite clear that their expressions are not consciously adequate to interpret their feelings. The passion, the rapture, with which such poets watched the ever-varying face of the deep has not found its rightful expression in their works. There is something always lacking amidst the exuberant enthusiasm of their love. No poet has yet embodied his dream of the sea. But the sea and the child have been the invention, or revelation, of the nineteenth century.

XXII

A Modern Passion.

This is quite intelligible. Although it seems paradoxical, the very infinitude of the sea, with its vast and beautiful suggestions, was the feature, which in the past, constituted its terror. For then, it was an unknown and awful element, pathless like a desert, and with all the minatory and frightful aspects which are associated with the idea of vastness and loneliness and danger. It was illimitable; and the illimitable always makes the heart of man to sicken and grow sad. But in our time, whilst its greatness and seeming infinity suggest eternity, and afford a background for all sublime and spiritual imaginings, the conquest of its terrors by frail, pitiful man has robbed it of that threatening and melancholy aspect which it seems to have presented to our forefathers. It is no longer, even in its most hostile moods, our dread, omnipotent master. The giant has been chained and wheeled into our service,

and our children play with him. But his greatness and vastness, his loneliness and majesty, his varied moods of tempest and tranquil peace appeal to our imagination, and give birth to that vast outburst of sea-music, which forms the most conspicuous and most delightful element in the majestic literature of the nineteenth century.

XXIII

Men and Books.

One supreme advantage of the winter months is that it takes you from the companionship of men, and throws you into the companionship of books. Books are greater than men, because they reveal man at his highest. The author of "Hamlet" and "Lear" is infinitely superior to the "immortal link-boy," or the cautious speculator of Stratford, or the gay companion, who gave up his life in a drunken bout. The divine poet who wrote that poets' poem, "The Faerie Queene" is not to be brought down to the mean level of the ruthless exterminator, the mercenary scribe and secretary of Lord Deputies and County Lieutenants. You cannot recognise the author of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* in the voluptuary of Venice; and you can never understand how the same pen that wrote "Endymion" and five immortal odes could have indited those pitiable letters to Fanny Brawne. The only two poets, who seemed to live up to their high calling, and keep the lofty serenity in daily life that breathes through their immortal verses, are Dante and Shelley. I think I would rather look at the glorious Florentine, and speak with him, than read the *Divina Commedia* or the *Convito*. And I am sure I would rather see

Shelley than hang over the pages of *Alastor* or *Adonais*. These men lived poetry, not merely wrote it. And I am sure neither their actions, nor their ideas, nor their principles, nor their converse could ever savour of the commonplace.

XXIV

A Student's Library.

But as we cannot "call spirits from the vasty deep," and as we have here the immortal part of them, let us be thankful; and closing down the winter curtains, and stirring up the winter fire, let us have a symposium of the Gods. And as the details of a student's library are as interesting as the details of a quarrel or a divorce; and as details, circumstances, surroundings, are the very things most readers want to see and stamp on their imaginations, let me mention briefly one or two that are trivial and yet of universal interest. And first let me mention that I read and write by lamplight — a good old-fashioned, brass-pillared, opal-shaded lamp, that throws a mellow light on these pages, and contributes not a little to raise the temperature of my study to the 62° prescribed by medical science as a comfortable heat. I mention that trivial fact, not only as indicative of a constitutional aversion to novelties, and a close clinging to ancient prejudices — "old wine, old books, old friends" — but also because this reactionary symptom in my character does not appear to recommend itself to my friends.

"Psha," they say, "get the electric light, man, or use acetylene gas, or at least incandescent burners. That old paraffin lamp is as antiquated as a quill pen or a horn spoon."

I rather like these remonstrances — for their ab-

surdity. Nothing gives me such pleasure, unlawful as it is, as to see pretentious people make fools of themselves. When I see a self-opinionated man tumble into some *bêtise*, it gives occasion for silent and undemonstrative laughter for weeks.

XXV

Uncharitable! Yes, so it is. But irresistible. It cannot be helped. When the Commissioners of National Education send me a peremptory order to construct at once lavatories in my mountain schools for the use of bare-legged boys and girls, I cannot help smiling all over when I recollect that it would be just as easy for me to build the aqueducts of Solomon on that mighty ruin that spans the lonely spaces of the Roman Campagna. And so, when my friends, advanced thinkers from the centres of civilisation, and brought into daily touch with the genii of gas and electricity, advise me to summon those good genii to this remote country village, I feel like asking them whether they have Aladdin's lamp in their coat pockets, or whether they hold the magic ring that would command all powers in earth or sea or sky. Then, when they depart, I turn up the lamp and wonder at the delightful imbecility of mankind. For it is surely one of the saddest symptoms of our age that, in our race after progress, we never consider the obstacles that may lie in our path, — temperamental, material, or otherwise, — and so run our faces against difficulties that we refuse to foresee, to the infinite detriment of our own persons, and, too often, the fatal obstruction of our plans and the fatal disappointment of our hopes.

Counsels.

XXVI

Clean Books.

On another detail I differ from my friends. I like, dearly like, well-bound books. I loathe, utterly loathe, shabby, ragged, or soiled volumes. I do not know a more unpleasant feeling than to take up a greasy, well-handled book. I have no pleasure in reading it, no matter how attractive and beautiful the contents. And if I allow my imagination to run riot over the past experiences of that volume, I generally end by placing it on the coals, or sending it as a present to some book-loving friend. How many fingers have touched that grimy cover! Sweat and dirt are well marked there. Perhaps it lay once or twice on the bed of sickness, and was fondled by some fingers, frail and white, which were shedding the scales of some disease. With all compassion and tenderness for such a sufferer, one cannot help feeling a little shudder of pain and loathing — no, that is too strong a word, which I keep in reserve for moral diseases, but, let us say, of shrinking — at the idea that these pages were fondled by such a hand, and may yet be reeking with the terrible but invisible remnants of the routed and conquered disease. Or perhaps this book was a long time in the possession of some bookworm, or lonely scholar, who had the lofty contempt of such spirits for mere physical cleanliness! It is a curious association of ideas, but we do insensibly connect the idea of great libraries and much learning with carelessness and infinite dust.

XXVII

Hence I never open a parcel of books without a certain feeling of trepidation lest I should shrink back in disappointment at their first appearance. Catalogues of books are like diplomatic statesmen. They do not exactly lie, but they equivocate. There is a good deal of mental reservation in book catalogues. You may read, for example, of a certain book which you would like dearly to possess, and this edition in four octavo volumes will just suit your library, and it is bound in cloth gilt. Here is a prize! You order it incontinently. The parcel duly appears. For three or four days you watched the post with impatience. You wondered what had happened. You thought you would like to dismiss the Postmaster-General and his entire staff of subordinates for such culpable delays. You said this kind of thing was only fit for Central Africa, but was intolerable in such advanced civilisation as ours. At last the volumes appear. Your anger against officialdom has died away. With trembling hand you cut the string, unloose the thick paper wrapper, and your heart sinks into your boots! The covers are clammy; the edges bent in and torn; the tops are broken; the gilding has been rubbed away in all kinds of unimaginable friction. You turn over the pages with a certain feeling of disgust, when, lo! at the end of the last volume you read, "End of Volume IV."; and, on seeking further, you find that you have secured but four volumes out of eight that complete the work!

New Parcels.

XXVIII

Illustrations.

Or you may read of books beautifully illustrated; and you would dearly like to see your favourite poet represented to your eye, as already to your imagination. You dream of fairy pictures, — cloud-castles, aerial splendours, vast and novel presentments of sea and shore and sky, sylphs and fays and Ariels, sculptured ideals and canvased perfections; and, lo! here are a few wretched drawings, raw, uncouth, hideous, — cheap photographic reproductions, or twisted monsters, presented to you with the assurance that this is *Art*. Just lately, I saw a fine edition of a great poet disfigured by such line drawings. The paper was good, the type excellent; but every page was ruined by hideous figures, supposed to be classical, and which resembled, more than anything else, the chalk drawings on a blackboard executed by some truant schoolboys in the intervals of school hours. If one could erase them, it would be all right. You had your text and paper and binding. But no! By some criminal cleverness, these drawings were intercalated with the text, and the one could not be erased without destroying the other.

XXIX

Bindings.

But there is a genuine pleasure — shall I call it rapture — in the very appearance of a beautiful, clean book; and no speculator in stocks beholds a rise in market prices with half the delight that fills the soul of the student when he sees a favourite book of a favourite author nobly

and worthily presented. It is not a purely intellectual delight. It is even a physical pleasure. A book bound in polished calf, with red or blue labels, and embellished with profuse gilt lettering, is a "thing of beauty in itself." I have a small octavo volume of the *Souvenirs* of Maurice du Guerin, bound in purple calf and beautifully lettered. It is a never-ceasing pleasure to me to take up that volume and *feel* the smooth perfection of the binding, and turn over these creamy leaves with the clear type and wide margins, that belong to the aristocracy of books, and place it in certain lights as you would place a costly picture, that its beauties might show in contrast and be exhibited under different aspects. And I keep it in good company, — amongst respectable, well-dressed citizen-books, even though some of them will only rank amongst the *bourgeoisie* of literature.

XXX

Well, here we are! *ci siamo*, *e ci resteremo*, during the gloomy days and the delicious long evenings of Winter. We shut out politics and controversies, and all those petty things that seem to engross the ever-fretful mind of man. Events have made us mere spectators in the eternal drama, which is either a mere puppet-show or a colossal tragedy, according to the manner in which you regard it. We will blot out the present, and become the tranquil contemporaries of a past that is so mournfully still and silent now, although the crash of conflicts and the tumult of factions sound like an echo from its chronicles; and of a future, that throws back no echo, for all is enfolded in prophetic silences and inarticulate con-

Ci siamo.

jectures, which will only speak when the ribbon of eternity draws out and touches the raw nerves of a supersensitive world. How tremendous, even in their ever-varying metaphor, are the words that Carlyle was ever mumbling in his old age, when he was already a forgotten voice:

> "To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow,
> Creeps in this petty pace from day to day
> To the last syllable of recorded time;
> And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
> The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle!
> Life's but a walking shadow; a poor player,
> That frets and struts his hour upon the stage
> And then is seen no more. It is a tale
> Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
> Signifying nothing."

Section II

XXXI

I notice that the Celtic temperament is curiously hostile to Shakspeare. He never has got a footing in France. Voltaire called him a barbarian; and in a furtive, half-respectful manner, the French critics seem to have taken his words as a tradition of their race. He violated the unities. This was his first great crime in their eyes. But this might have been condoned, but for those historical plays which have ever glorified England at the expense of France. For national prejudices will intrude themselves even into the halcyon region of literature; and many more criticisms are founded on race prejudices than on the canons of taste that have been recognised by the literary faculty in every age. Shakspeare found his resurrection in Germany. Lessing first, then Herder, then Schiller, saw, even through the opaque glass of translation, some transcendent merits in the great English dramatist; and, although we might be disposed to discredit Goethe's literary sense on account of his extravagant admiration for Byron and even inferior poets, there can be no doubt that the "Hamlet" critique in "Wilhelm Meister" aroused the world's attention to the vast merits and beauties of the poet, who, even in his own country, was fast sinking into oblivion.

Shakspeare and Germany.

XXXII

Celts and Shakspeare.

I confess I cannot, strive as I may, take much delight in Shakspeare. I suppose it is again the Celtic temperament, dreamy, cloud-riding, *spirituelle*, that holds in aversion the strong, earthy, lusty English spirit, so fully embodied in Shakspeare. The Shakspearean delineations of character, male or female, are thoroughly Saxon. There is no weakness there, no delicacy. The deep strong lines that he has drawn would never suit the airy pencillings of refined and spiritual temperaments. Everything is massive as a Cathedral pillar; beneath every character, even the sweetest and purest he has drawn, there is an element of strength and even coarseness, which is not found in the higher and more fragile organisms of Latin races. Even the women of Shakspeare strike us, notwithstanding all that has been written to the contrary, as wanting at least in those graces and sweetnesses that we are wont to associate with the female character. We make all allowance for the freedom of the age, its licentiousness, its bald, coarse language; and yet, we venture to think that the women who were contemporaries of Shakspeare in other lands were of a loftier and purer type than he has painted, and that he has done some injustice to the ladies of Venice and Verona by attributing to them certain *grosseries* of manner and speech that we think were hardly tolerated at the time beyond the coasts of Albion.

XXXIII

Whatever be the cause, I cannot take half the pleasure in Shakspeare that I experience in Milton, or Shelley, or Wordsworth. Forty years ago, as a student, I read him closely enough, and I think appreciatively; for I still retain many a folio page of blue foolscap, on which I had culled and composed for myself certain "Beauties of Shakspeare." I still think he is the world's greatest dramatist, and closest delineator of human passion and conduct as he witnessed them at the time. But I think there is a good deal in human nature that he missed; and I certainly think that there are far greater isolated passages of pure poetry in many another far less celebrated singer. Perhaps we cannot match the inimitable lines:

Great Lines.

> "The multitudinous seas incarnadine;"

or

> "In cradle of the rude, imperious surge;"

but I could name passages in Milton, and Shelley, and Wordsworth, which for continuity of high excellence cannot be surpassed by any similar lines in Shakspeare. The sustained grandeur of the stately speeches and noble characters in "Julius Cæsar" have always had a supreme fascination for me; and I am quite sure that all human literature does not hold anything so terrible as Othello's remorse after the murder of Desdemona. That line: "Cold, cold, my girl!" is tremendous; and "Dead, dead, Desdemona dead! Oh! oh! oh!" is the climax of all human mental suffering.

XXXIV

Shakspeare and the Stage.

Now, I am ever asking, what is it that repels me in Shakspeare? I admit all his intellectual vastness and greatness. He stands alone; or Dante alone may stand unabashed by his side. Yet I cannot read him with pleasure, but always as a study. And I cannot read him for profit, even though he has my fullest meed of admiration. I am sure that one valid reason is that Shakspeare's plays were written for the stage, not for the closet; for the glare of footlights, not for the student's lamp. This was borne in on me many years ago, when an amateur elocutionist, who had come into the locality on some business connected with lifting a sunken vessel, gave public recitations from Shakspeare. Wolsey's farewell was one of these; and after hearing it I decided, then and there, that I had never read Shakspeare. What must have been the illumination of such renderings as Garrick, or Kean, or Salvini, or Siddons gave to their generation! The cynical Heine confesses to his emotion when Kean ran wildly across the stage, shouting:

"A horse, a horse, my kingdom for a horse!"

I think I would advise every Shakspearean student to *see* Shakspeare first, and *read* him afterwards.

XXXV

His Coarseness.

Then, his coarseness is certainly repellent to our tastes. It may, or may not, be a valid apology for such obscenities to say that Shakspeare's age was a rough, virile one, when men and women spoke Rabelaisian. But we

cannot be blamed if, with our training, we feel as if walking through a field of meadow sweets we were to stumble suddenly into some hidden *cloaca*, or sewer, and carry the *sordes* with us in all our further walks. At least, I never take up Shakspeare without looking far before me, and carefully picking my steps. If the world were advancing along the lines of refinement and delicacy in tone and thought and feeling, it is possible that Shakspeare would eventually subside into the decent retirement of Marlowe, or Beaumont and Fletcher. But, as the contrary is the case, and plainness of speech about matters hitherto held in discreet silence; vulgarity of manners, arising from the unabashed and universal hunger after wealth; and open revelations about things hitherto shrouded in a noble reticence, are the characteristics of our age, Shakspeare will not yet be dethroned.

XXXVI

It is the exclusively human element in Shakspeare, however, that makes him so unattractive to many. Human nature, at its best, does not seem to be always engrossingly beautiful; and one of the reasons of Wordsworth's popularity with thinking minds is that he marked the natural revulsion from the Byronic school, with its gross pictures of corsairs, Don Juans, and voluptuous women, and insisted on a return to the simplicity and sweetness of nature. And human nature in Shakspeare is not of the highest and holiest type. There is a vast, nay, disproportionate preponderance of ugly and deterrent types. He appears to have created his women

Too Human.

types as a foil to the large number of bestial and incontinent rascals he has produced. In one way, his heroines redeemed his heroes. But even amongst his heroines, but a few, a Cordelia, a Desdemona, a Portia, or a Juliet, answer our ideas of what is sweetest, gentlest, and best in womanhood.

XXXVII

Heine puts it more strongly in his defence of the Shakspearean unities—the *enchaînement des scènes*, in which French critics supposed Shakspeare to be lamentably at fault.

Heine on Shakspeare.

"This world forms the stage of his plays, and that is his unity of place; eternity is the period in which his plays come to pass, and that is his unity of time; and the hero of his plays, the bright central figure, representing the unity of action and conformable to the other two, is — Mankind; a hero, who is always dying and always rising again, always loving, always hating, yet in whom love is stronger than hate; now crawling like a worm, now soaring like an eagle, now deserving a fool's-cap, now a laurel-wreath, or still oftener, both of these at the same time; the great dwarf, the small giant, the homœopathically prepared divinity, in whom the divine elements may have become diluted, but which nevertheless exist. Ah, let us not overrate the heroism of this hero, for the sake of modesty and very shame!"

XXXVIII

As a result of this too exclusive dealing with humanity (his dramas being the exact antithesis of Dante's in this respect) there is a singular dearth of those great and lofty ideas that belong to spiritual souls, and are, as it were, the properties of eternity. Shakspeare is essentially concrete in his art. He is a historian rather than a poet. He gives us "*the very eye and body of the time;*" but he does not clothe it in the subjectivity of a great creative intellect. Abstractions do not exist for him. Great principles, heroic dealings with life's mysteries, Titanic ideas of scaling the bastions of Heaven and wresting their secrets from the gods, are not to be found in his dramatic presentments. Once and again, as in Prospero's meditation,

No Abstractions in Shakspeare.

> "We are such stuff as dreams are made on,
> And our little life is rounded by a sleep;"

or, as in the lines:

> "To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow,
> Creeps in this petty pace from day to day;"

he repeats the words of Ecclesiastes, or the sad reflection of Job; but even this petty philosophy is infrequent. Men and manners, intrigues and chicanery, blustering kings and unfeminine women, fools and *debauchées* flit across his pages. There are many types of humanity left unrepresented; and the gallery is of gay, and interesting, but hardly of very sublime or edifying personalities.

XXXIX

Character Painting.

The supreme merit of Shakspeare seems to lie in his perfect delineation of character; and his marvellous adaptation of the English language to scenes and incidents that are truly dramatic. The language, just then in course of formation, was necessarily more virile and less loaded with foreign accretions than at any time since his period. And hence we find words in common use even now, but bearing in his pages certain peculiar meanings, owing perhaps to their collocation, which are far more marked than in their present use. I suppose no writer nowadays would use the expression:

> "all *gilt* with Frenchmen's blood;"

or speak of the clouds as:

> "base contagious clouds;"

or would dare use such a bold simile as:

> "Enfeoffed himself to popularity,
> That being daily swallowed by men's eyes,
> They surfeited with honey."

or that fine line:

> "horsed
> Upon the sightless couriers of the air."

These strained uses of language, these tremendous metaphors, these forced conceits and antitheses are peculiarities of his age. We find them in Marlowe, in Beaumont and Fletcher, etc.; and if

it be true that Shakspeare borrowed the plans and ideas of all his plays from previous stage representations, we must also admit that in the style of his dialogues and discourses he surpassed all his contemporaries, without originating anything new.

XL

Hence I do not know that we can address the shade of Shakspeare in the language just used by an admirer to Carducci, the author of the "Hymn to Satan," and other such poems — "Creatore e plasmatore di coscienza; artista del pensiero." Nor do I think the shade of Shakspeare would be gratified. His massive English intellect, his calm, majestic manner, outwardly manifested by the gentle, intellectual face that is so familiar to the world, would probably shrink from the too emphatic compliments of French and Italian admirers. It is only Latins and Celts that push things to such extremes. The English and Teutonic genius is pivoted on a more firm basis. It is slow to move, and when moved, it proceeds calmly and with dignity. But "Creatore e plasmatore"? Hardly. "Holding the mirror up to Nature" is much better. Shakspeare was not a Michael Angelo that could create. He needed a world of men and women as types to be transferred to the canvas of his poems, and thence paraded on the stage.

Not a Creator.

XLI

Shakspeare-Bacon Controversy.

Will the Shakspeare-Bacon controversy ever be settled? Hardly, unless fresh documentary evidence can be brought to light. The arguments on both sides seem overwhelming. It is impossible to imagine Bacon speak of the Romans as wearing hats, ships landing in Bohemia, and Aristotle contemporary with the Trojan war. And here is a pretty little blunder that that philosopher could never make:

> "Timon hath made his everlasting mansion
> Upon the beached verge of the salt flood;
> Whom *once* a day with his embossed froth
> The turbulent surge may cover."

On the other hand, if the Earl of Pembroke be the hero of the sonnets, and Mistress Fitton their heroine, it seems incredible that one, brought up like Shakspeare, and only a few years removed from more or less plebeian surroundings, could address such familiarly affectionate language to one who was so far removed by birth and station.

XLII

English Opinion.

I have a suspicion that most English thinkers are now convinced that the man Shakspeare who came up to London from Stratford-on-Avon, and held horses at the doors of theatres for many years, could never have been the author of such marvellous dramas and poems. But they cannot bring themselves to extinguish one

of their great luminaries, even though it added to the exceeding great lustre of the other. National pride has hitherto exulted in these twins of genius, Bacon and Shakspeare; it cannot bear the thought that there was but "one bright, particular star," in its firmament. And national pride is responsible not only for the sins of statesmen, but for a great many of the more venial offences that are committed in the more secluded domains of literature. I say "venial," for they are easily pardonable. And a world that does not love England will at least forgive it for its glorious pride in Shakspeare. He is her guardian angel — her pontiff, who, if ever the Huns and Goths shall leap the narrow slit of sea that has hitherto saved England from destruction, and penetrate to her capital, shall warn them back, as Leo warned Attila from the walls of Rome. If it could be proved that Shakspeare was a myth, it would be a greater loss to England than that of her Indian empire, or even — Ireland!

XLIII

There is a curious passage on this subject in a letter to his wife written by Lord Houghton, whose individual opinion is valuable, inasmuch as he must have discussed the question hundreds of times with all that was best in London literary circles, and gathered his opinions from them:

Lord Houghton.

Turin, Wednesday.

I have yours of the tenth, so you see we are not very far asunder. This place is new to me, and not easily got at again, and the personages amusing, so I have settled to stay here until the end of the week, and cut Paris short. You

would like this climate very much, a sky continually bright, and fresh air. I think it keeps me rather "tender" and nervous. I am afraid I shall be at Stoneleigh on the twenty-third and you must write up to Stanley, who, whoever, I believe you may say, agrees with me that *there never was such a man as the lamented Shakspeare.*

XLIV

An Eclectic.

What if, after all, we find that the word "Shakspeare," instead of standing for an immortal unit, was really, like Homer, a mere symbol for a multitude of players and dramatists which then thronged the theatres of London? Or, if there were the man, Shakspeare, that he was but a clever collector, "a picker-up of pearls from dunghills," a kind of chiffonier, who gathered up the remnants and rags and potsherds of plays, the casual observations of philosophers, the tavern gossip of travellers, the inspired utterances of drunken poets, and mixed them all in the alembic of his own genius, or took up the discarded discoveries or creations of others and gave them an immortal name, as the adventurer Vespucci did for Columbus and the Western Republic. I find no difficulty in imagining a Bacon, or a Raleigh, or lesser souls, amusing themselves, in the leisure of high political intrigues, in watching the progress of a London play; and sometimes furtively bringing down to the green-room of the theatre a manuscript, composed in the intervals of business, and asking that young man, William Shakspeare, to put it before the public in his own name. *Noblesse oblige!* and it would never do for a Lord Chancellor to appear before the footlights as the creator of clowns and fools and madmen.

XLV

Two things we are prone to forget in forming our estimate of the Shakspearean dramas. The first is, that in the Elizabethan age the theatre was everything. There was practically no other amusement for city folks. Where we have institutes, and societies, and clubs, the geniuses of that day had the tavern; and for travelling, cycling, motoring, for Carlsbad and Aix-le-Bains and Marienbad, there was no substitute but the theatre. Education ranked higher, even though not so widely extended; and theatricals, in public or private, were the order of the day. Yet, at that time, the player and actor or dramatist was regarded by high society somewhat as we regard the strolling player of to-day — the Crumlesses, Codlins, and Shorts of a bygone period. Yet, secretly and surreptitiously, genius saw that what was good enough for ancient Greeks might be good enough for the modern Briton; and perhaps statesmanlike Bacon foresaw that, if a high patriotic sentiment was to be maintained in the country, it would be most happily fostered by the presentation of historical plays, where the great figures that had passed across the stage of English history might be again brought to life and action on the mimic stage of a London theatre.

The Drama omnipotent.

XLVI

And in the second place, we are prone to forget that the nervous, sinewy English of Shakspeare, and the dialogues interspersed everywhere were really an exact reproduction of every-day manners and speech amongst his contem-

Jeu de Mots.

poraries, only raised just a little to suit the dignity of the stage. Those little witticisms, the eternal play on words, the antitheses and sly allusions, the bold metaphors and the dainty euphuisms, so utterly foreign to our most commonplace utterances, were in constant use in good society at that time. The amusement of camps and courts, the pleasures of country life, even the stately surroundings of the royal palaces, were enhanced by this studied interchange of wit and puns. The great queen herself did not disdain to join sometimes in this *jeu de mots;* and a passport to her equivocal favour was adroitness in the use of language, and a knowledge of all the quips and cranks that could be played on the simple English tongue. This was not quite the same style of wit that in pre-revolution times, the ages of Louis XIV. and XV., made the *salons* of Paris famous. The Elizabethans were witty punsters and broad humourists. The French do not know what humour is, even if they be the wittiest race in the world.

XLVII

Judge Webb's Opinion.

I think the neatest summing-up of the arguments *pro* and *con* in the Bacon-Shakspeare controversy is that of Judge Webb, although I cannot bind myself to his decision:

"In the case of the authorship of the Shakspearean plays there are circumstances of difficulty which are common to both candidates for the supreme distinction. As far as appearances go, neither of them claimed to be the author; neither of them published the immortal works; neither of them gave any directions for their publication; neither

of them mentioned them in his will; and to all appearance either of them was utterly insensible to their literary value, and each of them was utterly indifferent to their ultimate fate. The only difference between the two is this — that if the Player were the author of the Shakspearean plays, he had every motive to proclaim the fact; while if the Lawyer and Statesman was the author, he had every reason to conceal it."

XLVIII

A Cambridge M. A.

In saying that Shakspeare did not know everything, I am curiously reminded of an acquaintance, who has long since passed beyond my ken, but in whom at one time I felt some interest. When I first knew him he was a gentleman-graduate, B. A., or possibly M. A., of Cambridge; and in dress, manner, deportment, all that could be expected of a scholar and a gentleman. I was a young missioner in an English city, and had not even a nodding acquaintance with him; but the glamour of a university education to my imagination hung around him; he was one of the *Dii majores* to be addressed with "bated breath and whispering humbleness." I little thought that the day would come, and come swiftly, when he would be glad to get a sixpence from me to buy bread, or — drink! That word explains all. He had come down, or rather rushed down the declivities of life pell-mell; and now lay a broken and distorted wreck amongst the human debris cast out by fate from the urn of necessity. The silk hat had given way to a broken bowler; the shining boots to patched and broken shoes; the

morning coat, without fray or crease, to a wretched blue serge jacket with broken buttonholes, tied with a piece of cord, and badly concealed, or half-revealed by a long, grey dust-coat, whitening under use and time.

XLIX

The Accent of Universities.

When I first made his acquaintance, he had not tumbled quite amongst the potsherds. He hung suspended, like those marble genii in the piazza at Turin, driven out by the forces of civilisation from their mountain fastnesses, and hanging head downwards, like falling angels, on the facile descents towards Avernus. He was a bruised and beaten, but not a conquered spirit. I cannot remember now how I struck up an acquaintance with him, but I well remember how deeply I was impressed by the wide range of his acquirements, and, above all, by that peculiar pronunciation of Greek and Latin which seems to be *cachet* of a university training. Yes! there was the educated gentleman seen through all the sad disguise of rags and penury. Nothing seemed strange or unfamiliar to him in all ancient and modern literature. He quietly and unostentatiously passed along from the "Electra" of Euripides to the "Henriade" of Voltaire and the "Iphigenia in Tauris" of Goethe. He was eking out a wretched subsistence at the time, in a narrow room in a squalid back lane in the city, by teaching a few little schoolboys at night a little writing, a little geography, and the Rule of Three. He took his professorial fees mostly in drink. I could have cried for him, and yet he was always protesting that he was not an object of disdain nor of compassion!

L

But where did I bring in Shakspeare? Oh, yes, I remember. I was one day deploring his misery when, at a certain railway station which he frequented for obvious purposes, he accosted me for a shilling.

A Dialogue.

"I hope," I said, "that you have found the jewel in the head of the toad Adversity."

He had not the slightest sense of humour. He was always grave, calm, majestic in his rags.

"Yes," he said, "and perhaps more successfully than you may be disposed to imagine. I have found the elixir of life. I am like the emperor of old: I drink of nectar in which pearls are broken and dissolved."

I stopped.

"Have you much time at your disposal?" he asked.

"Well, the magnificent unpunctuality of these trains," I replied, "has given me compulsorily three-quarters of an hour. I have no objection to a Socratic disputation. But you?"

"Oh, my day's work is done," he said. "You have given me a shilling, with which I can purchase *Nirvana*, and sufficient for the day is the good thereof. But"—he hesitated a little, and I thought I saw a faint pink blush steal up on his pallid face—"you—eh?—are not ashamed to walk up and down such a public place with me?"

"Not in the least, my dear fellow. I am known pretty well here. So are you. It won't affect either of us materially."

"Good! 'T is a pleasure to meet with a philosopher. Now, you mentioned Socrates, I think?"

"Yes," I replied.

"I presume you admire him?"

"Well, somewhat," I said in a tentative way; "he was very ugly, you know; and then — Xanthippe!"

"Well, ugliness is a recommendation — sometimes. Beauty is always a *dono infelice*. But Xanthippe, — that is legendary, invented by some admirer who wanted to excuse the mightiest of sages for what needed no apology, inasmuch as it constituted the chief element in the Socratic philosophy."

"You surprise me," I said; "how is that?"

"Well, sir," said my tramp, "the chief constituent in the Socratic, as indeed in all philosophy, is the discovery of the great secret of *anæsthesia*."

I still looked puzzled.

"Have you never read that Socrates was able to drink Alkibiades" (he had an old habit of always pronouncing the Greek as in the original) "and all the other golden youth of Athens under the table?"

"Ye-es," I said dubiously. "Are you making a new *Apologia?*"

"No, no!" he said quickly. "That would be dishonourable. But in that marvellous faculty of the great sage consisted all his wisdom. I presume you admire his glorious death, — martyrdom I believe it is called?"

"Certainly. I think it was sublime!"

"So do I. But probably our reasons differ. His death was a *euthanasia*, not for any sacrifice it involved, for there was none; not for his serenity, because there was nothing to alarm him, — but because he died as he had lived, seeking happiness by the mere cessation of sensation. He had found the great secret. So have I."

"I am glad indeed to hear it," I murmured

faintly. "Do you know, I have been commiserating you all these years."

"Quite unnecessary, sir," he said grandly. "I assure you your commiseration was quite misplaced. You see before you a man who is passing through life with undisturbed serenity, and who will face death calmly because of its even more profound peace."

"I am really delighted to hear it," I said. "I wish I had your secret."

"'T is yours already," he replied, "but, like the vast majority of the species, you don't know it. It is contained in the philosophy of Locke, — all pain comes from knowledge, all knowledge from sensation; therefore destroy sensation and you annihilate knowledge, and, with knowledge, pain. Hence you see the wisdom of Socrates. He knew the value of anæsthetics in life and in death, in wine and hemlock."

I murmured something about the higher faculties, — reason, conscience, sense of responsibility, honour, etc.

"All moonshine, sir!" he said. "Pardon the expression. These things are all the action, or irritability of nerves. Love, — the irritation of a certain set of nerves. Ambition, — the excitement at the centre of some other ganglion. Avarice, — another set called into play. Zeal, philanthropy, charity, — all nerves, nerves, nerves! Emotion, pleasure, pain, — all words denoting the mere titillation of nerves; and all meaning the same thing."

"Surely you don't contend that pleasure is pain, and *vice versa?*"

"Certainly!" he replied. "For example, take love, that paltry and puerile passion, of which, I am

proud to say, I am absolutely immune. Analyse it! And who can tell you whether it is pleasure or torment? If you cannot analyse, go to the great chemist and analyser, Shakspeare. Read his Antony and Cleopatra. For one pleasure, paltry, if not degrading, he suffered the torments of the damned. Take ambition! Look at Napoleon! Glory, victory, honour, power! All words, words, words! His valet, who heard him rise from his camp bed after Austerlitz and Wagram, and heard him mutter, "*Une autre bataille*" in an accent of despair, knew better. Look at your millionaires — your Goulds, your Vanderbilts, your Rockefellers, your Barnatos! Toiling like dray-horses to get money, and then groaning in spasms, like a boa-constrictor, until it is disgorged and dissipated. Look at me, at me!"

I looked. He was not an attractive object. The electric bell in the Northern Hut marked the approach of my train.

"Would you believe that I used to dine with great people at the Criterion, London? Yes, sir! I drank champagne at six pounds the dozen, and never smoked anything under a shilling cheroot. Was I happy? No! Nerves and sensations again. I hated, loved, winced under sarcastic looks, cultivated homicidal feelings in my heart. Here at The Crown, with a clay pipe, a glass of Cognac, and a *clientèle* of half-drunken labourers I reason, argue, talk, philosophise, rule, govern, — am a king!"

"Yes!" I replied, —

> "'Kings may be blest. But Tam was glorious,
> O'er all the ills of life victorious.'"

"Precisely! The immortal exciseman and ploughman knew the secret of life. And behold!

Men have raised more monuments to his glorious memory than to Wellington or Napoleon. The verdict of the world is always right; it recognises its kings,— Burns, Mangan, Poe, Maginn, Balzac, Murger, Schiller, Coleridge, — myself."

"You have n't mentioned Shakspeare," I said, "amongst the kings!"

"N—no!" he replied hesitatingly. "A man that could quit the taverns and theatres of London at middle-age, when life is in its right ascendant, and go down to a provincial town with money" (his voice took on an accent of disgust), "money, and actually invested in house property — think of it — house property, was never a king of intellect. He wore the mask and buskins — that was all!"

"But Shakspeare died in a drunken bout!" I pleaded.

He started, and a smile of ineffable pleasure seemed to cross his pallid face.

"Did he?" he cried, in the accent of one that had saved a lost soul.

"So it is reported," I replied.

"I am so glad!" he said, still smiling. "After all, Shakspeare was one of *us!*"

I bade him good-bye! and took my seat. Two fine ladies, dressed like peacocks, and probably with the intellects of oysters, looked askance at me. As the train glided from the platform, I looked out. I thought I saw the frayed skirt of a drab overcoat vanishing through the door of a third-class refreshment-room.

LI

A Descent.

I wonder is there a more terrible thing in life than to see a noble mind, raised by its own nature, and by the study of great works, far up on the shining peaks, where the poet and idealist alone can breathe; and after such an earthly apotheosis suddenly compelled to descend to earth and exchange, under the bare coercion of securing the necessaries of life, all the splendours of imagination, all the glorious dreams of cloud and mountain-top for the bare, bald realities of every-day existence? And yet it is the fate of many bright spirits. Natural disposition, training, experience, seem to open up for such souls a long happy life teeming with all kinds of felicities, and very far removed from the gross and sordid materialism of every-day life. It is a terrible disillusion when an acquaintance with these conditions becomes a necessity of existence. And when once this necessity becomes apparent, there is no return to the land of dreams and high imaginings. The beautiful papilio, Psyche, is stripped of her wings, and never has strength to put them out again.

LII

Seneca and Shakspeare.

How to combine the ideal and the real, the *Dichtung und Wahrheit* of existence, is a difficult problem, a feat that but few have successfully performed. Shakspeare is one example, as we have just quoted; Goethe is another; Tennyson is a third. There certainly is some feeling of *bathos* and anti-climax in the life of Shakspeare. It seems impos-

sible that the mind that wrote "Hamlet," and, still more, the "Sonnets," could actually be descending at the time to the paltry considerations of receipts at the pit or gallery of a theatre; and should rush away from the scene of such tremendous triumphs to buy a few houses in his native village. It leads one to suspect that the divine genius, as we are wont to consider him, was after all but a commercial speculator, investing in poetry and philosophy simply for the remuneration that an age which was impassioned about such things freely and ungrudgingly gave. One suspects the genuineness of Seneca's philosophy when we know he was a usurer, and died worth three million sesterces; and one suspects the divinity of Shakspeare when we find him buying houses out of the proceeds of his plays.

LIII

Shakspeare and Jean Paul.

I am of opinion that no modern writer approaches Shakspeare but one. That is Jean Paul. They are the two Titans; but Shakspeare prefers to remain on earth. But for wielding, forging, and hurling the thunderbolts of mighty words and startling metaphors, and antitheses and contrasts that strike you with a shock, they stand alone. There are not in Richter the grand varieties and diversities of character that make the dramas of Shakspeare such a brilliant and glowing mass of colour. He affects rather the simple life of simple German people, except where, as in his "Titan," he reflects the thoughts and manners of the nobility in rank and genius. But I doubt if Shakspeare approaches Richter in the richness and exuberance of his fancy. The great

difference is that Shakspeare uses metaphors in words which Richter elaborates into similes. But two such daring, insolent, triumphant demigods the world has not seen before or since their times. Some critics, who clearly have never read beyond *Flower*, *Fruit*, and *Thorn-Pieces*, are content to rank Richter with Sterne or Goldsmith. When you have read *Levana* you rank him with Bacon; when you have read *Titan* or *Hesperus*, with Shakspeare.

LIV

Souls and Stars.

If he had had the musical and dramatic power of Shakspeare, or if Shakspeare had had his fancy and power of seeing metaphor everywhere, what an interchange it would have been! In the vast range and scope and circumference of thought, Shakspeare easily outstrips his rival; but his thoughts, his domain, is always of the earth, earthy. Richter is circumscribed in abundance and variety; but in his leap towards the Infinite he is illimitable, or only bounded by Space. In reading Shakspeare one walks amongst men and women, however diverse their worth; in reading Richter one is always in view of souls and stars. He never allows us to forget that this little human theatre is o'ercanopied by the sky; and that life is but the vestibule of eternities. Hence the gross materialism of Shakspeare, however real it may be, contrasts but ill with the lofty spiritualism of Richter. A Gione, or Amone, or Nadine, are spirits beside such beings as even a Miranda, or a Rosalind.

LV

Yet I found that in Germany Richter is no longer read. The enthusiasm that hailed the publication of every new book, the fervid letters addressed to him by admirers of every rank and station, the tremulous worship of women, — all have passed away. Goethe and Schiller are still in the heyday of popularity and triumph; and every year seems to make the *Goethe-Haus*, in Frankfort, the centre of larger pilgrimages, — the Mecca of Goethe-worshippers from all parts of the civilised world. It is easily accounted for. Richter's abominable obscurities, that made a Richter-Lexicon necessary even during his life, repel modern readers, who, in the stress and storm of modern conditions, have no time to spend in penetrating such labyrinths of thought; and, in the second place, that humanism, which has become the religion of our age, and which has made Shakspeare so popular, has told with equal effect against the romanticism of Richter, and in favour of the refined paganism of Goethe. It is possible that a wave of romanticism, such as that which created Tieck, Novalis, and the Schlegels, may again sweep over Germany. If it does, the transcendental spirit may again leap into the ascendant, and the Aufklärung, the Illuminism, of Goethe, sink submerged, at least for a time.

Richter not read.

LVI

Faust and Freemasonry.

It was at one time said that *Faust* was the Bible of Freemasonry, as Shakspeare was the Bible of Humanity. It was forgotten that the religion of Freemasonry (for it is a distinct religion, with its ecumenic confessions of faith, its liturgy, its orders, its worship) and the religion of Humanity are the same; and both are atheistical. The first Freemason lodge in Germany was founded in 1733 at Hamburg; the first English lodge in 1717. It was from English deists that the inspirations of atheism, which bore such fearful fruit in France, were carried to the Continent. It was from French Deists that the evils were carried over the frontiers into Germany, and there bore fruit in the humanism, illuminism, of the eighteenth century, and the rationalism of the nineteenth. Rousseau and Voltaire preached it in France, and the cult of Goethe and Shakspeare arose simultaneously in Germany. Those evil spirits have never been laid. They assume Protean forms; but the genetic impulse in atheism and humanism is the same. They have one enemy; and only one — the Catholic Church.

LVII

Three Religions.

There are three great religions, and only three. All others are offshoots or branches of these. They are Christian Theism, Spinosism, and Humanism. Or otherwise, God, Matter, and Man. The first is the logical issue of all reasonable thought; the second is the stopping-place, where Reason sinks down faint-

ing, and Faith cannot wing it over the abyss; the third is the hypostasis of the most foolish pride that ever entered the mind of a created being. God is the term of all fine intellects working upward and outward through the covering and integuments of matter towards the everlasting Ideal. Substance, or matter is the worship of Illuminism or Materialism with its motto, *Wahr ist, was Klar ist* (*True is all that clear is!*). Humanism is the most abject of idolatries, worse than that of the Scarabæus or the Ibis, for these were but symbols of something far beyond, whereas Humanism is the worship, direct and immediate of Man, unless we suppose, as Fichte did, that the aggregate of mankind is God; or that the progress of the ages tends to extract from the womb of time the God that is yet to be created.

LVIII

How this pretty Deity, called Humanity, conducts himself has been seen in all human history; but most of all in that period of enlightenment and progress which culminated in the glories of the French Revolution. The Freemasonic, humanistic circles which commenced with dreams of it knew not what, which would lead to a new awakening it knew not where, were suddenly broken into segments of Jacobins and Girondists, Dantonists and Robespierrists, each apparently determined to show, with all the fury and ferocity of wild beasts, how completely they could eliminate the very root-elements of all that is human and civilised from the human heart. The world has seen greater human holocausts than those which were offered up to Hate and Passion on the *Place de la Concorde*.

Humanism.

The pyramids of skulls that marked the track of Tamerlane, and the very grass withering under the feet of the horse of Attila might seem more appalling. But for ghastly surroundings, for a revolting exhibition of all that was possible to human guilt and depravity, the French Revolution bears away the palm. The very excuses made for its enormities only aggravate them. After reading these nightmare details of orgies never equalled by Imperial Rome, one can never think of Paris again as the centre of the world's civilisation. It is the *cabaret de la mort*. We can quite understand why Cardinal Newman, in his Anglican days, faced the horrors of a sea-voyage rather than set foot on the soil of France.

Section III

LIX

Just as I write these words, comes news from that same France, witty, intellectual, Freemason and humanistic, of another revolution, unbloody but truculent and inhuman. That cry of humanity seems to mean, by some perversity, whatever is inhuman, just as the watchword "Fraternity" seems to usher in every fratricidal struggle. The strange thing, however, is that the French people, supposed to be witty and sarcastic, seem to have utterly lost these national talents. Why Robespierre, who decreed the existence of the Supreme Being, was not killed with ridicule long before his shattered head fell beneath the guillotine, we find it difficult to conjecture. And why his modern imitator, Viviani, who, in our days, has "by one magnificent gesture swept the Supreme Being out of existence," is not annihilated under a storm of sarcastic pleasantry, is also unintelligible! Is France doomed? Has she lost her sense of ridicule, — or that fine perception of her own absurdities, which, alas! does not always accompany the dangerous talent of seeing and noting the sad *bêtises* to which other individuals and natures are subject?

The Sense of Ridicule.

LX

What is this Shakspeare says —

> "But man, proud man,
> Drest in a little brief authority, —
> Most ignorant of what he 's most assured,
> His glassy essence, — like an angry ape
> Plays such fantastic tricks before high heaven
> As make the angels weep."

No! my dear Mentor of Humanity, it is not over such scenes that angels weep. It is over such scenes that the young angels scream with riotous laughter. They may weep and shed their tears in wintry rains across the dreary landscapes of earth, over little children broken on the bed of suffering, or over some lost, struggling soul, making ineffectual efforts to regain some forfeited position. But for the little parasites of this moth-planet, this grain of sand in space, who arrogate to themselves attributes too great for the seraphim, and whom their own scientific and critical spirit cannot convince of the truth of their insignificance, although they think it dethrones the Eternal; who make themselves Gods, whilst Science declares them atoms, — for such there are no tears in Heaven, only the inextinguishable laughter of the happy immortals.

The Angels' Laughter.

LXI

There is another point of resemblance between the master-mind of England and the master-mind of Germany. They keep their own personalities very much in the background. They refuse to appear on the

The Puppet Show.

stage. Showmen of that puppet-tragico-comic theatre of varieties called the world they stand in the wings, away from the naphtha-fuses that flare and smoke in the wind; and cry aloud:

"Come up, ladies and gentlemen! come up, and see my show, — the only real and genuine presentment of the ever-entertaining, ever-amusing troupe of mimes and tragedians, called Humanity. Come up! come up! Only sixpence! Only sixpence! And you will see kings and queens, fools and mountebanks, courtiers and knights, tavern-brawlers and heroes, bishops and friars, nuncios and cardinals, warriors and boasters, dainty ladies and disreputable drabs, Greeks and Romans, Christians and infidels and Jews, English and French, Danes and Normans, Welsh and Irish and Scotch, ghosts and sprites, monsters and angels, hideous witches and dainty Ariels and Queen Mabs, murderers, suicides, violence, craft, — all that belongs to the common herd, humanity, nothing omitted that you may find elsewhere; for this is the only, real, unadulterated, genuine Masque of Humanity. Sole Proprietor, William Shakspeare, under the distinguished Patronage of Baron Verulam, the Earl of Pembroke, Sir Walter Raleigh. Come up! Come up!"

Is it a fraud? No! Shakspeare's Masque of Humanity is perfect.

LXII

So too with the German puppet-show! Actors and actresses, princes and clowns, countesses and hinds, Greek priests and German mystics, philosophers and country maidens, fiends and witches, sages and children, — all stream

Goethe.

athwart the motley stage. The same heroism, the same coarseness, the same licentiousness, the same bravery and self-sacrifice, that mark the English puppet-show are here. But the noble figures do not reach the height of Shakspeare's heroes; and the lower types are more revolting. The actors in "Hamlet" are very much the same as those in "Wilheim Meister"; but the witches that challenged the returning warriors on the blackened heath are not quite so loathsome as those who danced on the Brocken on the Walpurgis-Nacht, and Caliban is hardly as gross as the man-created *Homunculi*. I doubt if in all dramatic literature there is a more revolting scene than that on the Brocken; or a more revolting and significant and bestial incident than that of the red mouse leaping from the mouth of the young beauty with whom Faust was dancing. But then there are creeping things everywhere in Goethe. And Retsch has done badly in depicting them in his line engravings.

LXIII

Schiller.

Yet here is a significant and pregnant fact. Goethe and Schiller lie side by side in the mausoleum of the Grand Dukes of Weimar. A writer, who seemed to love both equally well, tells us that at his last visit, the coffin of Schiller was piled high with flowers, placed there reverently, and reverently renewed, day by day, by hands of worshippers; whilst, on the casket that holds Goethe's remains there are a few withered blossoms, and no more. How can we explain this phenomenon; this strange discrepancy between the verdict of the literary and artistic world, and the

verdict of the popular heart? Is it that Schiller was more patriotic? — for Goethe was too great to be a patriot. Or is it that the former spoke more immediately to the heart of humanity than his majestic friend and rival? Or is it that Schiller's personality passed into his works, and that his thin, worn, intellectual features shine from every page; whilst Goethe is but the showman, in the side-scenes, with his bell and corbona for honours and rewards? We do not know; but the *vox populi* sometimes, not always, seems to ring out a true note of appreciation.

LXIV

The Home of Mysticism.

Very many of the finest spirits in modern literature, no matter what might have been their starting-point in reading, seem to drift unvaryingly and untiringly in the direction of German mysticism and transcendentalism. Germany is the home of idealism. The Christian mystic finds much food for thought in the writings of Tauler and Ruysbroeck and Thomas à Kempis. And the literary mind, even though it should not make German transcendentalism the terminus of its search after fresh and virgin thought, will nevertheless find itself drifting, by the sheer necessities of modern tendencies, towards the literature of that period which marked the very zenith and apogee of German genius. As every road leads to Rome, every train of thought seems by some invincible attraction to lead onwards to that cloudland and mistland where great spirits seem not only to have found a footing and a rest, but to have disported themselves in effortless

felicities amongst ideas and problems the very names of which are calculated to make weaker spirits faint. Alas that all this should be so largely consecrated to error, so vehement against revealed and lifegiving truth! What a gigantic aerial tournament or intellectual joust it would be if in the Coliseum, or other world-gymnasium, the spirit of an Aquinas could be pitted against Kant, Suarez against Spinoza, Rosmini against Hegel! I have not mentioned St. Augustine. It would need an archangel to be worthily placed face to face against that supreme and serene intellect.

LXV

The Home of Science.

But I think the secret of that general tendency towards the metaphysical schools of Germany is probably the passionate desire of fine minds to get away as far as possible from Humanism, — Materialism of every kind in poetry and philosophy. Many in their intellectual wanderings feel, as Cardinal Newman whom I have already quoted felt, that they would much rather go around Europe by sea than set foot on the soil of France. For France is the home of all that is positive, logical, mathematical, material. A nation that solved great questions by the edge of the guillotine, and then employed a mathematical Napoleon to carry its spirit to the foot of the Pyramids and up to the walls of Moscow, is not the nation of high thinkers. And a race that has no great spiritual poet or seer, and whose oratory seems always to degenerate into gasconade, is best represented by its perfect prose, its mechanical stage, by its laboratories where men's

hands are blistered with acids, and ladies handle deadly elements in the pursuit of science and fame, and by the fact that it established a factory of gloves from human skins at Meudon and decreed in its Senate the existence of the Supreme Being!

LXVI

The Need of the Age.

Idealism, not in its metaphysical, but in its religious and literary meaning, as opposed to Realism and Materialism, is the fulcrum, the only fulcrum, with which an Archimedean spirit can move, and lift, the human race. And it was this Idealism, that seemed to hover always around the confines of atheism in its efforts to grasp the shadows of its own intellectual creations, and which ushered in the Romanticism which held in happy bondage for a generation the choicest spirits of Germany. It was a force that seemed to call back the planets from wandering aimlessly in space, and swing them into their proper grooves around the central sun of Catholicity. Now, this romanticism sprang undoubtedly from the poetic philosophy of Schelling. And what our age needs most — for it has certainly drifted back into the old lines of sensistic irreligion — is not the great Catholic poet (who would be certainly not only unappreciated but gravely misunderstood), but a school of writers that, commencing with Christian Idealism, will wean men's minds away from body-worship, mammon-worship, clothes-worship, pleasure-worship, and, carrying the human mind once more towards chivalry in politics, æstheticism in art, idealism in literature, romanticism in fiction, dethrone the little god Man, and enthrone him amongst God's servants.

LXVII

A Significant Group.

"In vain! in vain!" some one cries. Man and Matter are the conquerors. It is an age of science, of retorts and alembics, laboratories and museums. And Science is the enemy of Idealism. It is an age of materialism, when the sensible things of life are of supreme moment, and the invisible things are unrecognisable! It is an age of militarism, — of great, grey barracks everywhere, of millions of men standing to arms in all the barrack-squares of the world; of huge floating batteries circling around the coasts of the world; of cruel and inhuman taxation crushing out the energies of workers, and paralysing every attempt at initiative in the arts that make for civilisation. Idealism? Pah! Go to the capital of your Germany, — your home of Idealism and Poetry; pass down under the limes in the *Unter der Linden*. Stop! Behold this group. The central figure is Frederick. The four corners are filled with bronze figures of soldiers. The spaces are filled with similar bronze effigies of soldiers. Soldiers everywhere. Where are your poets and philosophers now in this German land? Oh, yes. Look here! Right behind, and under the tail of Frederick's horse, are two statues. Of whom? Kant and Lessing! Placed there to show how easily poetry and philosophy can be kicked into illimitable space by the iron hoofs of militarism!

LXVIII

A grim, if somewhat contemptuous comment on that Herbartian system of salvation by education that is again coming into vogue. If anywhere on earth education has been made paramount in social and political economics, surely it is in Germany. Splendid schools, perfect equipment, trained teachers, scientific appliances, State control, discipline almost military in its severity, and above all, the "*vielseitige Interesse*" on which Herbart laboured so painfully, and which should have been promoted in Germany above all other places by the example of such lofty and gifted minds; and lo! for all this, and as its final effect and growth, behold a system of militarism carried so far that, even in a public monument, the effigies of warriors are everywhere placed in situations of honour, and those of the most illustrious geniuses of the Fatherland are relegated to a contemptuous obscurity. One would be tempted to ask at once, where now are the *ideas*, the *ideals*, the *devotion*, — the *trivium* in which Herbart placed all his hopes?

The Trivium of Herbart.

LXIX

But perhaps this is not quite fair, although it is certainly significant. Herbart opened up the tremendous question, which certain educationists solve in an airy manner in these days, whether education is to be accomplished by *developing* the faculties, or by feeding them. Or, in other words, whether educa-

Instruction versus Development.

tion is development by *Exercise* or by *Instruction*. I know of absolutely no thinker of the present day who would not promptly answer that the whole essence of education consists in the exercise of the faculties, not in the filling-in and feeding of the mind through facts and data. Yet the Herbartians fling a decided negative athwart that stream of modern tendency; and contend that the whole curriculum of studies which have for object mental culture should also have for object moral culture; that there is no mental growth except by ideas: and that righteous ideas, such as will tell eventually for the benefit of the whole community, can be derived only from apperception — the study, through story, legend, and history, of the lives and deeds of all the great men who have left the impress of character on human history; and a study of nature-facts and nature-wonders through the eyes of Science.

LXX

A Triptych.

I have said that it is not fair to judge of the mind of Germany from that group of effigies in the *Unter der Linden*. I had a better object-lesson of the German mind and character at Nauheim, three years ago. Every one knows that the Nauheim baths are specifics for heart trouble, etc., but every one does not know that here in this fashionable watering-place, with its monster hotels, its charming villas nestling each in its cradle of trees, its electric lights, its baths, etc., may also be seen German life typical of all classes, from the highest to the lowest. I do not know whether others see things as I see them; but probably I had contrasts in my mind drawn from experience of

my own country, and it was probably those contrasts that fixed the pictures and picture-lessons so deeply on my mind. These pictures or mental cartoons formed a kind of triptych, or triple representation, which I took to be indicative of certain phases of national character, and national character developed or created through a long course of years by means of education and discipline.

LXXI

First Picture.

The first thing that struck me in watching the ways of these people was the perfect equality that seemed to obtain amongst all classes in public places. "Equality" is a word of French revolutionary coinage. It rings hollow and spurious along the Boulevards. It is a genuine thing beyond the Rhine. For here in Nauheim, as in all such places, is a Kursaal; and in front of the Kursaal is a vast terrace or promenade; and under shelter of a permanent awning, and lighted by a thousand electric arcs are some five hundred or six hundred tables, numbered by twenties, and each twenty under charge of a special waiter. Here, three times a day during the season, and *at the cost* of the State, a splendid band plays for the delectation of visitors and natives; and here, shoulder to shoulder with aristocratic and noble visitors from all parts of Europe, are the *bourgeoisie* and *ouvriers* up from Frankfort for a holiday. There at that little round metal table is a duke or earl; and here at the next table are Fritz and Gretchen, Frau and Fraulein, eating sausage and drinking small beer. And there is not the slightest appearance of a sense of intrusion amongst these workers, — no insolent

assumption of rights, or menacing scowl or gesture: "I 'm as good a man as you!" Oh, no! The sense of freedom and equality has been born with this race. It is taken for granted. And the polite waiter is as courteous and assiduous about the table of the workman as when he takes his orders from "my lord!"

It was a magnificent human lesson!

LXXII

The second picture in my triptych was this:

Second Picture.

On Sunday nights, in the great hall, recitals were given from the masters. The first recital was exclusively from Gounod. The second from Wagner. At the end of the hall, where I sat amongst some German priests, who seemed to know as much about these classical pieces as about their Breviary Hymns, was a large crowd of students, each with the score and a pencil in his hand. It was very interesting to watch their eager, boyish features, lighted up with enthusiasm as they followed with such critical and intelligent interest the performers, jotting down notes, asking questions of each other, making comparisons, all the time in a quiet, polite, undemonstrative manner, so that no one around them was in the least degree embarrassed. Twice they were hushed absolutely into silence, dropped their pencils, and closed the sheets of music. It was when a young violinist stepped forward from the orchestra, and executed in a marvellous manner some study, nocturne, fantaisie, or fugue, utterly unknown to me. The two attendants could hardly carry in their arms the piles of bouquets offered silently and without an attempt at applause from the

vast audience. There these remained piled on the stage, whilst the young executant went back meekly to his place. The whole thing was beautiful, — the music, the appreciation of it, the silence. I wondered, was civilisation focussed here?

LXXIII

Next day I got into an accustomed corner beneath a spreading lime to watch, and listen to, the band. The Instrumentalists, be it said, went through each programme as conscientiously and as fully in the morning, when they had only a few nodding trees, and a certain middle-aged Irish priest for audience, as in the afternoon, when several hundreds from all parts of Europe were gathered in silence on the veranda. I thought I noticed my maestro of the violin and the bouquets, calmly obeying the baton of the kappelmeister, as if he were a young novice or apprentice under momentary apprehension of dismissal. I thought if I were he, and possessed of such genius, I would never play but before the Grand Duke or the Kaiser. I was puzzled over such humility, such self-effacement. I questioned the young Jew who lent us Tauchnitz editions for a few centimes each afternoon.

Third Picture.

"Yaas," he said, "dot vhos Bull."

"But," I said, wondering, "that young man is a genius, a meistersinger."

"Yaas," he said, "zo he is!"

"Then," I cried, "why does n't he come over to London, or go to New York, and reap the rewards of his genius? What is his salary here?"

"About eighteen schellings a week, at most a

bound. The kappelmeister gets two dousand bounds from the Grandt Duke. He pays all the rest."

"But," I said, "that young artist could earn fifty pounds a week in London!"

"Berhaps zo," he said carelessly. "Und I dere say he vhill goom to London yet. He is berfecting himself in his art!"

"He is perfecting himself in his art!" The words ran through my ears all day, and every day, as I watched that young man, silently, patiently, "without haste, without rest," labouring after perfection. And only a few weeks before, I had heard the kind lady who examined our children in needlework exclaiming:

"Ah! Celtic impetuosity again. There is the one dominant Celtic note in all our work,—to get it done, no matter how; but to get it done, and take leave of it for ever!"

And I also thought of certain wise sayings and holy maxims, spoken by deep and learned thinkers of the higher issues of life, of our need of aspiration after perfection, of our preparation for that place where there is no blot, nor flaw, nor stain in the spirits, and fore the face of Him before whom the stars are not pure; and I bowed my head and was silent.

LXXIV

But here were three great object lessons. *Equality*, not a catchword of revolutionary humanism, but a reality, derived from the clear conception that each individual was a child of the State, claiming his birthright, and prepared to defend, even at the cost of life, that mother-

Equality.

land which protected him. For, as I watched those German labourers, their strong, burly, Saxon frames, I remembered the charge of the Würtembergers at Sedan, and the ring of fire and iron that Moltke drew around the disorganised and demoralised legions of France. And I knew that if the word went forth, each of these young students, now apparently so engrossed in music, would fling the sheet aside and take up his soldier's blanket for the bivouac, and take down his rifle from the rack, and hang the violin in its place with the words, "Till I return, or —" This is genuine manliness and patriotism. No hysterical screaming, nor speech-making; no insolent demands for levelling up or levelling down; no feud of class against class; but the instinct and conviction that all are equal in the eyes of the State, — equal rights, equal duties, the equal claim for righteous protection, and the corresponding obligation to stand shoulder to shoulder in defence of the commonwealth that guarantees to each his natural and hereditary rights.

LXXV

Education.

I cannot for a moment agree with the Herbartians who place the ultimate salvation of States and peoples in education, unless, indeed, they understand education in its broadest and widest signification, as the development both of moral and mental faculties. But I like the idea that the mind must be fed, as well as exercised, just as nature, in its physical processes, places nutriment in the first place. You may develop the mathematical mind on sines and co-sines, and sharpen the reasoning faculties on these whet-

stones until it can split the abstrusest problems, and yet find in the end that you have but

> "A reasoning, self-sufficing thing,
> An intellectual all-in-all."

Or you may develop the imagination, and stretch it out in illimitable fancies, and yet find but a Byron at the end. Or you may develop the memory, and produce a calculating-machine for a dime museum. But this is not education. I think the time may come when our educationists may have to hark back to one Herbartian idea, that the mind has to be fed as well as the body; and that this process can only take place successfully when great thoughts, inspired by great examples, from man or nature, are made the mental pabulum of the young.

LXXVI

Discipline.

The third idea is Discipline, and discipline not of the schoolmaster's ferule, but *self-imposed*, through the sense that there can be no ultimate perfection except through the long and patient elaboration of that task or talent which it is given to us to perform or develop. This involves restraint and reserve, — restraint over impulses which, in the name of self-interest or self-advancement, hurry us on to the fruition of labours which we have not honourably accomplished; and reserve, — the husbanding of resources which, too lavishly utilised, might lead us into intellectual bankruptcy, and the modest silence about ourselves which, even in a blatant world, is certain to be rewarded by an acknowledgment of whatever talents we possess, provided we have not irritated public

opinion by wounding public vanity. Apart from its ultimate reward, modesty is a charming and useful virtue. And it is the virtue of the great. It is only the Pharisee that wears long phylacteries, and loves salutations in the market-place; and he has passed down the ages as a synonym for an unclean platter and a whited sepulchre.

LXXVII

Christmas! Actually, Christmas again! With what terrific speed we are moving on, — on towards the immeasurable gulf of Death. *Eheu Fugaces.* When we were boys, how that grey, old hypocrite, Time, disguised himself and played with us, and stretched out for us the long, long, summer days, which we thought would never end. How he accompanied us, throwing sunlight and flowers all the way; and stood by us and commanded, like Joshua of old, the sun to stand still in the heavens, and pour down his rich, warm gold, as we leaped the brook in the glen, and chased the dragon-fly, with his gorgeous panoply of gold and bronze, down where the yellow irises were waving above the cool stream; and fished for sticklebacks with worms, and thought that we had made the greatest discovery in natural science in this century when we found that the little broken fragment of a twig at the bottom of the pellucid stream was really the home, the palace, the armoury, the disguise of some white, aquatic caterpillar. And we thought what a cunning little creature it was to hide itself thus! We did not know the infinite science and the unbounded resources of the great magician, Nature!

LXXVIII

The Rapids.

But now, now! the old fellow has thrown off his disguise, and claims us no longer as playfellows, but as victims. He seems to have put the *alae*, the wings of Mercury on his feet; and, instead of the *caduceus*, he has taken up his scythe, and bade us prepare for the harvest. He slides our mornings into evenings, our days into days, our weeks into weeks so easily, yet so swiftly, that we hardly wake up except to sleep again; and sleep itself is but a moment's oblivion between a dream and a dream. And on, on, on we go, swiftly, silently, irresistibly, our relentless comrade and mentor and conqueror at our side, until suddenly we find ourselves in the rapids above the great gulf of the grave, and we hear the falling of the waters into the immeasurable abyss, and we feel the suction of eternity.

LXXIX

Work.

What then? Well, then work, work, work; *tempus breve est*, and work is the elixir of life, — the one thing alone that, whilst it accelerates our moments, yet sends them gloriously freighted to eternity. It was the wildest and foolishest dream to suppose that Creation ended on the Seventh Day. The work of creation is never-ending. *Ohne hast, aber ohne rast*, the Ineffable Mind that is governing the universe is ever evolving from new or old materials new and glorious forms, each surpassing the others in perfection of design, and symmetry of execution. Old and worn-out things are broken up and dissolved in the alchemy of creation; and behold! new forms spring

forth, and look, and breathe, and face the Eternal, tingling with the sense of existence, eager to take their part in the colossal drama, and confident of their immortality. There is nothing old, nothing weak, nothing feeble in creation. Everything is young, with a sense of actual youth, or the consciousness of immortality.

LXXX

I forget whether it is G. H. Lewes who says that the two most tremendous lines in all literature are those of Goethe: — The Loom of Time.

> "At the whirling loom of Time unawed
> I work the living mantle of God." [1]

Lewes was a Goethe-worshipper; but the lines are certainly great. God at his loom, or rather His glorious spirits, His angels of the universe, everywhere throughout creation, with eyes fixed on the eternal archetype and design, that hangs before the walls of Heaven, weaving and framing, loosing and dissolving, plying the vast shuttles of Force and Matter throughout the infinite mazes of star-worlds, so that, if we were not happily deaf, we should be stunned by the thunders that reverberate everywhere from these stupendous operations; and, if we were not happily blind, we should be stricken by the effulgences that blaze ever up from the molten masses that are flung into the perfect moulds of other worlds and other beings than we.

[1] So schaff ich am sausenden Webstuhl der Zeit
Und wirke der Gottheit lebendiges Kleid.
Faust.

LXXXI

A Watch and a Vision.

And if in these harmonic, yet awful operations our tiny moth-life seems so insignificant that there should be no count of it; if our existence here is but

> "a watch and a vision
> Between a sleep and a sleep,"

yet we have our little parts to perform in the economies of creation; and at least we can feel that we are in one sense greater than the mechanism of the universe, for that, as Pascal says, is unconscious; but we, at least, have the consciousness of our own littleness. Turn on, then, Old Time! Put your hour-glass and your stellar chronometers before us; wave your scythe above our heads. Do we not know that when the last sands have run out from that bellglass of yours, a Divine Hand will turn it over for eternity; when your clock has struck its last hour, the bells of Heaven shall ring for us; and when your scythe has mown down the last ridge in the fields of God, the harvest will be gathered into the granaries of Heaven?

LXXXII

Christmas Eve.

But it is Christmas, — Christmas Night. The clock on my mantel-piece peals out ten; and there is deep silence over all things. The last village-stragglers have said, "Good-night" and gone to their homes. The last footstep has sounded, echoed, and died along the street. I feel absolutely alone, here by my fireside. The great

Christmas candle, a yard in length and two inches in diameter, is burning silently in the next room, and casting down a flickering flame on the glistening holly with its scarlet berries beneath. I remain up, for I have to say the midnight mass at the convent, preparatory to my two masses in the morning; and, as I watch the fire in the delicious, but almost oppressive silence, it seems to me that all the delightful ghosts, which that intense and realistic spiritualist called Literature has created, come in and walk in solemn procession before my eyes. I watch them all tenderly, lovingly, as they pass by and look at me with the wistful sadness of eternity in their eyes, until the convent bell rings out at a quarter to twelve; and I pass out into the night.

LXXXIII

It was a clear, starlit night, which did not quite show all its splendours, until I had gone out from the streets. For the lamps were left alight by the men in charge; and from every house, even the humblest, the tall Christmas candle, placed in the window, shed a yellow light across the pathways. But the moment I got beyond the range of the houses, and their black roofs and gables no longer cut off large portions of the sky, the full splendours of a winter firmament burst upon my sight. It was no novelty, for I flatter myself I have quite an intimate, almost hand-shaking acquaintance with these nocturnal beauties, which so lavishly squander their splendours on a world which heeds them not. It makes one smile to hear that this universe was made for man; whilst the petty creature goes back to his

Midnight.

blind bed, exactly when the firmament unrolls its magnificence and displays all the silent wonders, all the ineffable radiances that it keeps cloaked and hooded by the day. Nevertheless, although familiar to me, I am always startled when the effulgence suddenly bursts upon me. These constellations seem to smite one with their splendours. Every moment you imagine you can hear the sounds that must underlie their awful operations. Jewels of the sky, set in its black mourning pall; lamps in the City of God; whatever figures of speech you use fade into insignificance before the revelations of science, — suns, infinite suns, sunk in the depths of illimitable space.

LXXXIV

The Constellations.

The *Dragon*, folding his coils as usual around the *Little Bear*, was due north; and a little to the northwest, and just on the verge of the horizon, the beautiful *Vega* of the Lyre was barely visible. The tail of the *Great Bear* hung down into the Northern Seas, pointing to the invisible *Arcturus;* and the hunting-dogs of *Boötes* and the giant *Hercules* were asleep beneath the cold rim of frozen Arctic seas. Directly east, but low down, one could hardly see the sickle of *Leo*, were it not for the brilliant jewel, *Regulus*, in its handle; and in the east too, *Cancer* and *Hydra* intervening, the *Gemini* looked down on *Procyon*, the great glowing eye in the *Canis Minor*. In the southeast *Canis Major* was just rising; *Sirius*, the peerless one, was spitting out his blue and green and yellow flames right and left, and the triple stars that form the jewelled belt of *Orion* pointed

steadily towards him, whilst they seemed to light up all the darkness around them; and higher up the net of the *Pleiades* was strung with the white pearls of its six great stars, and the innumerable aiglets of its other star-sprays. In the southwest, *Cetus* the whale was spouting his glories above the seas. *Mira* "the wonderful," the variable one, had set her lights in honour of the night. *Capella* in *Auriga* was almost in the zenith; *Perseus* with the demon-star, *Algol*, was watching the fettered *Andromeda;* and the four-wheeled chariot of the winged *Pegasus* seemed toppling down into the west.

LXXXV

Three thousand four hundred years ago, these glories seem first to have attracted the eye of man, who, notwithstanding the Greek derivation of his name, seems more inclined to fix his gaze on the earth, than upon the sky. Later on, holy Job asked: "Who hath resisted Him, and hath peace? who shaketh the earth out of her place, and the pillars thereof tremble. Who alone spreadeth out the heavens, and walketh upon the waves of the sea. Who maketh Arcturus, and Orion, and the Hyades, and the inner parts of the south. Who doth things great and incomprehensible and wonderful, of which there is no number." And the greatest, most incomprehensible, most wonderful of all things wrought by Omnipotence was assuredly that mighty mystery which we commemorate to-night, and on which, nineteen centuries ago, those same constellations that are now blazing in the heavens looked down and trembled, as the angels clove their way

The Angels at Bethlehem.

between them, and made them sing together the praises of the Most High. It was a strange and terrible thought — that those stars looked down on Bethlehem. They saw and wondered, and were still; and abyss called out to abyss, as all the heavens told the glory of God, and the firmament revealed His wonders.

LXXXVI

Child and Mother.

And then came the tremendous contrast! From under that blazing firmament into the little chapel I came, with its painted ceiling and little human decorations. I passed the crib, as I came to the altar, and saw — *the Child and His Mother!* And then, after the jubilant chorus of the *Gloria in Excelsis* had died out, came the ever sweet, ever tender words of the *Adeste.* It was sudden, and striking — the contrast between the universe of suns and this little chapel, — between Omnipotence guiding that vast and awful procession of worlds outside and the same Omnipotence hiding here under the most helpless of all forms. But these things touched the intellect. The moment came, when the flood-gates of emotion were suddenly opened; and I had to suspend for a moment the onward course of the divine sacrifice. It was at the awful words:

Deum de Deo, Lumen de Lumine,
Gestant puellæ viscera.

God of God, Light of all Light,
The womb of a child is bearing.

That word "puella," a little girl, placed there in literal opposition, or rather real conjunction with

Omnipotence, choked me. The sudden descent of the Immense, the Almighty One, into the feeble and tender embraces of a child-mother, was too overwhelming. It is the confutation of atheism, the mockery of human pride, the suspension of inexorable law in favour of a divine manifestation of love — all at once.

LXXXVII

And lo! as Christmas departs, the days seem suddenly to open up; and though the sun seems to linger yet below the horizon in the morning, he does not hasten towards his setting. And the old adage comes true: Days Lengthening.

> "As the day lengthens,
> The cold strengthens."

For now, we have had a tremendous fall of snow, a biting blizzard, that whitened all the air and then passed away leaving its feathery deposit thick upon the ground. Down came a heavy frost upon this, hardening and annealing and enamelling it, until the nerves of the young tingled with the excitement of prospective skating, and the old and feeble huddled with shrinking shoulders near their fires. I have a little oil-painting that exactly reproduces the scene, — bare trees, loaded with their pretty white burden, a misty atmosphere through which the pink and contracted and feeble sun strives in vain to shine, and the long avenues of forest glades, where the prints of human feet are visible. And here is a pen-picture of the same from a modern Italian poet: —

"Una caligin bianca
Empie l'aer dormente, e si confonde
Col pian nevato all' orrizente estremo.
Tenue, rosseggia e stanca
Del sol la ruota, e fra i vapor s'asconde,
Com' occhio uman di sue palpebre Scemo,
E non augel, non aura in fra le piante,
Non canto di fanciulla, o Viandante."

"A whitish darkness fills the sleeping air, and mingles with the plain even to the extreme horizon. Weak, and rosy and small, the sun seems to hide in the vapour, like a human eye without a lid. No bird, no breeze stirs amongst the plants; nor is heard voice of maiden or wayfarer."

LXXXVIII

A Kleptomaniac.

I regret to have to report to my readers that Ju, the less attractive, but stronger-minded of my two kittens, has developed into a confirmed kleptomaniac; and that Charlie is beginning to suffer from a mild attack of megalomania. I had to send away Ju's mother, on account of her incorrigible propensity to put her whiskers in my cream-ewer and taste my butter before I had tasted it myself. And now the dreadful law of heredity seems to obtain in her filial relative, and the shameful propensity seems to have been handed down with interest. She appears also to have a decided habit of breaking up fish-bones, and leaving them in all conditions of *débris* on my carpet; and as no venerable old maid (I speak with the deepest reverence of a class whom I really venerate) has such a horror for untidiness as I have, I have been obliged to punish Ju, which I am sorry to say she resented with all the pertinacity and inso-

lence of the modern spirit. She did not protest except by repeated violations of the rights of property; and by a reproachful and argumentative look in her green eyes, which was eloquent beyond words. To-day, after having sundry things thrown after her by way of protest and punishment for her attacks on the privacy of my breakfast table, she took her place on my hassock near the fire, and said with her eyes: —

LXXXIX

"You object, it appears, to my assuming any rights over your breakfast table?"

"Certainly," I replied. "My housekeeper tells me that you are actually overfed in the kitchen; and I can testify from personal observation that the house is overrun with mice."

A Socialist.

"Mice?" she said, turning up her little nose, "Mice? I hope I am beyond all that!"

"I remember a time," I said, "when you made yourself beastly sick with a mouse, or at least, a portion of one."

"That was in my infancy, or adolescence," she said. "I trust I am beyond all that now!"

"Oh, I see," I replied. "You have advanced as far as cream and lemon sole just now?"

"Quite so!" she said, without winking an eye.

"Well, I object," I said emphatically. "I suppose in the strange evolution of things we are coming to that, but I am not going to anticipate!"

"What can you do?" she said saucily. "I admit that you are the stronger; but I have science and cunning on my side!"

"I can suppress both at once!" I said. "And what is more, I shall, if they are unduly exercised!"

"But how, how?" she said saucily.

"Well, first of all," I replied, "there are at least forty executioners, in the shape of small boys, just now at school, but shortly to be liberated; and there's an extremely convenient pool of deep, stagnant water just a few yards off near the bridge —"

"Pah!" she said. "You daren't," or "You durstn't," I am not sure which. Ju is rather a *précieuse*.

"Why, might I ask?"

"Because you profess to be opposed to capital punishment," she said. "And you are aware that, in the comity of nations, the whole tendency is towards its abolition."

"That is for human, not for feline animals," I replied, although thunderstruck at her mode of argumentation. I thought she smiled sarcastically.

"These distinctions are out of date," she said scornfully. "The advanced science of the day has put an end to the old, unscientific, and illiberal distribution of the animal kingdom. Charles Darwin and Edward Clodd and Professors Huxley and Clifford have rearranged these things on a more scientific basis."

"I see you have been reading books, instead of minding the business for which you were created — that is, keeping rats and mice out of this establishment," I said. "Here's the cause of all the trouble of the world, — the general mixing-up of all classes, grades, species, genera, in one hodge-podge, with the schoolmaster's ferule over them."

"I am fully prepared for that outburst," she cried bitterly. In fact, her voice was raised almost into a caterwaul.

"You believe that education belongs to a class, and is the privilege of a few. We maintain that education is the prerogative of all created things — "

"To teach them to steal cream and fish-bones ? " I replied.

I thought the sarcasm would have killed her. She only smiled. It did not raise a hair on her soft fur.

"There 's no question of stealing where there are rights," she said.

"Of course not," I said; "but where do the rights come in ? "

"Precisely," she replied; "where do *your* rights come in ? "

This was a stunner. I did not want to talk theology with a mere kitten, although I had no objection to talk political economy. I thought I 'd cut the matter short.

"My rights come in here," I said, — "that, if I catch your whiskers in my cream-ewer again, or see so much as an infinitesimal atom of fish-bone on the floor, there is not an article in the room that I won't turn into a missile of destruction."

"Of course," she said. "Might is right, is it not? That 's Carlylese philosophy."

"All that I know is," I replied, "that you are a feline Radical and Socialist. You are bad enough in yourself, and you are corrupting the morals of that innocent and angelic Lu."

"Morals ? " she said; "morals ? That 's more of your priestcraft — "

I was about to demolish her with a heavy dictionary, but she glided away to a safe distance.

"I meant nothing personal," she said; "but there 's no such thing as morals. These are anti-

quated terms. There's instinct; and I believe you superior animals affect to have something superior to instinct which you call 'reason,' but which, if we are to judge by results, is a most fallible and unreliable guide. But 'morals,' 'morals'! — all morality is simply resolvable into following your instincts, passions, desires. Why should Nature implant them in us but to help us to gratify them?"

"Look here, pussy," I replied; "you should have been head kitten to Madame Warens and her protégé, long ago by the Lake of Geneva. You are an anachronism. You are born out of time. You are altogether too astute, too logical, for this generation."

"By no means," said Ju, bridling up at the intended sarcasm. "There never was a time when *our race*" — with what pride she uttered the words! — "had so many opportunities for self-improvement or self-advancement as at present. The larger humanitarian ideas that obtain in all higher circles, and which, I am sorry to say, you are too retrograde and reactionary to adopt, are moving us onward and upward towards 'some far-off, divine event,' when we shall evolve into — "

Ju's eloquence failed her here. She could not for a moment recollect the form of the final evolution of her species. She instantly, with unerring feminine tact, harked back.

"When, in the most advanced circles of society," she continued grandly, "our interests are not only studied and considered, but considered paramount, — considered paramount," she repeated; "when great ladies take us up, and place us in positions of dignity and comfort far beyond those allotted to mere human infants; when we have specialists set

apart for our physical complaints, and footmen are deputed to wait upon us; when scientists have discovered that we have souls as well as you; and when we are interred with all honours, and with more genuine tears of sorrow than are lavished on your species; and when, in the words of a certain vulgar song of yours, our lady friends — I use the word advisedly — whisper in the ears of deceased felines, whilst their hot tears rain down on the beautiful fur, 'Not Adieu, dear little kitten,' but 'Au revoir —'"

"Scat!" I cried, as I flung an Imperial Dictionary at her. She dodged it, of course. At a safe distance she arched her back and stiffened her tail.

"Ps — s — st!" she cried, as she made for the door. "Why did n't you throw one of your own books? It would have been a more dangerous because a heavier missile."

XC

We made it up, however. You must make up everything nowadays. It is an age of compromise all around. The old landmarks are disappearing rapidly. Universal suffrage is in the air. Evolution is progressing by leaps and bounds. The animal creation will have developed into man, with rights of voting and meeting, long before man has put on the wings of an archangel. So I have made it up with Ju; and, in return, Ju has informed me that Charlie has had a bad attack of megalomania. It arose from the fact that he was very unwisely patted on the head by the eight-buttoned glove of a lady who had come into the garden. Charlie, who has imbibed Communistic ideas from the arch-conspirator Ju, is quite

Compromise.

prepared to be friendly with every one. I have no doubt whatsoever that he would shake hands with a burglar, and probably show him over the premises. As to his master's rights, he acknowledges nothing of the kind. The *Zeitgeist* is on him, — the spirit of the age, the spirit of insurgence and independence, and, alas! also the spirit of idleness and self-indulgence. Charlie, once obedient and respectful, now turns away his head when summoned. He affects not to hear, and assumes a certain stolidity of aspect, which is his canine way of showing independence of spirit. Ladies should not pat little puppies on the head with eight-button gloves.

Part III

SPRING

Part III

SPRING

Section I

I

It is January the 20th; and yet I call it Spring, because it is Spring. Old Winter may come back yet, and pay us a complimentary visit; but so far, for the last fortnight he, with his icy beard and rheumy eyes and icicled hair, has vanished with the holly and ivy of Christmastide. And Spring, the delectable queen and fay and fairy, has already sent her *avant-couriers* far and wide across the barren but yearning land; and the pretty things that hid away in silence from the rude embraces of Boreas are now shyly peeping up — crocus and purple primula, and snowdrop and daisy, and look towards the pallid and pinkish sun, as if to ask when their mother and mistress shall come. And the lambs are out in the fields, frisking and leaping in all the splendid joyance of youth, sometimes straying away in the exuberance of life and spirits from their mothers; but each infallibly finding its own when the maternal bleat calls back the truant. How grave and solemn are those sheep-mothers, who two years ago were riotous and irresponsible lambkins.

A Glimpse of Spring.

"Oh, Gioventù!
Oh, Primavêra, gioventù dell' anno.
Oh, Gioventù, primavêra della vita!"

II

I stood yesterday on the highest attainable summit of Kilcolman Castle. It is barely three miles north-northwest of this village, and seems but a short, gray stump of an ancient keep, or frontier castle, perched above a brown bog, and looking white in sunshine, black against the dark-blue of the neighbouring hills. I pulled aside the iron gate that leads into a kind of basement story, where also is the donjon or keep, an apparently indispensable appanage to these old castles, with walls six feet thick, and barely lighted through a thin slit, from which the huge walls open inwards. A narrow stone winding-stair leads to the first story, which is now but a grassy sward; and a further but narrower stair leads upward to the summit of the castle. Thence you can see five counties — from the Commeragh range in Waterford to the far mountain chains of Kerry. The Galtees seem to frown over your head; and the lordly Shannon is a gleam of glory on the horizon. Here Spenser, Secretary to the English Deputy, resided many years, in the enjoyment of three thousand acres of land confiscated from the Earl of Desmond. And here he managed to combine these two most dissimilar callings, — poet of the "Faerie Queene," and cold but ruthless exterminator.

Spenser.

III

Here the Queen's favourite, Sir Walter Raleigh, came, after having circumnavigated the globe, and brought potatoes and tobacco into Ireland; here in his honour Spenser composed his welcome: "Colin Clout's come home

A Poet's Grave.

again"; here, in loyal fealty to his Irish wife, the poet wrote his magnificent "Epithalamium"; and here, as a reward for his ruthless policy towards the native Irish, was the castle burned down remorselessly, and here his infant child, notwithstanding the heroism of the rapparees, was burned to death. Over there in London, the great poet, the *thorough* politician and sectary, died a pauper in King Street, and — was buried in Westminster Abbey. He died of actual want, in abject penury; yet he had more than royal obsequies. For his brother poets gathered around his remains, and each in turn flung into the open grave the ode he had composed on the gentle poet, and the pen with which it was written — an honour greater than fifty salvoes of artillery, or the purchased panegyric of some popular orator. And if that curious phantom called Shakspeare was there, and flung *his* sonnet and pen on the coffin, did the dead man, I wonder, shed tears?

IV

A Martyrology.

What a terrible martyrology is that of genius! For one Tennyson or Browning, dying calmly of old age, with all its attendant honours, what a grim holocaust has life demanded of so many others, equally dear to the fickle and inconstant Muses! Genius at the best is a tragic thing. Nature, when she does bring forth a rare spirit, should have it wrapped in cotton wool, and sequestered, as far as possible, from the rougher elements of daily existence. Except alone for purposes of study, it should be kept far from its kind; or allowed only to associate with children, or the meek and gentle elders, who have the gravity

of eternity imprinted on heart as on features; and the charity of experience manifested in their daily lives. But genius cast amidst a rude, boisterous, tumultuous world, full of animalism and passion, and riotous in all the insurgency of its radiant ignorance, is like an Agnes or a Polycarp in the Coliseum, or a Dante sinking amid the circles of Hell. And when, after the fierce buffetings of life, it sinks into the grave, one can almost hear the verdict paraphrased by the French cynic:

"Le bruit court que Pison est mort. C'est une grande perte. C'etoit un homme de bien; et qui meritoit une plus longue vie. Il avoit de l'esprit et de l'agrément; de la fermeté et du courage. Il etoit sûr, généreux, fidèle! Ajoutez — pourvu qu'il soit *mort*."

V

Verdaguer.

Who was Jacinto Verdaguer? I have heard that he was born in Barcelona in 1845; that he was chaplain to a ship, the "Ciudad Candal"; that he had one at least of Johnson's author-evils, — a patron, Marquis de Comillas; that he wrote an epic, "The Atlantide," in which the greatest passages are: "The Burning of the Pyrenees"; "The Garden of the Hesperides"; "The Cataract"; "The Engulfment." It is also said that he had trials — *ça va sans dire;* that he was accused of certain unpleasant things of which a poet, and above all a priest-poet, should not be guilty; that he bore all with philosophical serenity; that he wrote "Idylls and Mystic Songs"; "Patria"; "Songs of Montferrat"; "Religious Songs for the People"; "Dreams of St. John"; "Jesus, Child";

"Flowers of Mary"; another epic, "Canigou." Died in June, 1902, aged 57. *Buried with public honours!* Alas! Were it not better for him to have been a village *curé;* never to have written anything but his little *prône* for Sunday morning; and to have died amidst the sobs of his people, and had his requiem chanted by his village choir?

But who *was* Jacinto Verdaguer? His fame has been circumscribed and local. Was it worth the cost?

VI

What a pathos underlies those words — a failed life, *une vie manquée!* I struck across the expression a few evenings ago in connection with Herder. He died of disappointment, of a broken heart, of a failed life. I had been thinking of him as a colossus, as a genius who stood like Dante's tower,

Herder.

> "Full square to all the winds that blow."

I only saw him as he appeared to Goethe that evening in the hotel at Strasburg, where he had gone for surgical help for his eyes, — a tall, commanding figure, with high, broad forehead, and eyes that, even through the inflammation which affected them, were yet piercing; hair curled and dressed; clad in strict, clerical costume, black coat, and a long silk cloak flung gracefully over it. He was but twenty-seven years old at the time; and as he came down the grand staircase of the hotel, probably feeling his way owing to his imperfect sight, there leaped up the stairs against him a young, light, Olympian figure, tall and masculine, with great eyes that glowed with

genius and animation. With the ease and assurance of a student, this young fellow accosted the senior and venerable figure that was before him. It was the beginning of the life-long friendship — the mutual respect never broken by manly criticism; and the mutual assistance always given freely and without any sense of recompense — between Goethe and Herder.

VII

A Colossal Work.

Now, Herder died at the age of fifty-six; and during those brief years he was not only leading preacher at Weimar, but such a zealous and indefatigable student in poetry and philosophy that one stands amazed at the prodigious amount of work he accumulated during the short period allowed him on this planet. There was no national literature existent at the time with which he was not perfectly familiar, — Sanskrit, Persian, Hebrew, Syriac, Greek, Roman, Moorish, Spanish. He had studied the folk-lore of the world from Lapland love-songs to Scotch drinking-songs; from a wild Norse scald to some voluptuous and erotic ballad sung in the wild places of Sicily. Then, passing from poetry to her more austere sister Philosophy, he projected in his late manhood a "Philosophy of the History of Humanity" in twenty-five books. Of these, he had completed twenty before he was called away; and these are marked by a learning, a synthetic power, a minute analysis and discriminating force, and a solemn eloquence that make it ever a matter of surprise that, whilst Gibbon's turgid pages are so much prized, this greater and more original book has been suffered to pass into oblivion.

VIII

But, nevertheless, the question will arise, why Herder died in anguish with such a fatal verdict upon his lips. It cannot be said that he was unappreciated during life. Not Popular. The great literary luminaries, Goethe, Schiller, Wieland, seemed to revolve around him as a central sun. All that was brightest and most intellectual in Weimar, the spiritual capital of Germany, hung upon his lips when he preached. His orthodoxy was slightly suspected, as he seemed to lean towards a mild form of pantheism, and was a professed admirer of Spinoza. But this will not account for his acute disappointment with life. These are the minor worries from which no career is safe. Can we search for and find the cause of his ultimate despair in the fact that he was a *social* failure, probably owing to the concomitant irritability of genius? He was not a popular man. He was too great to be merely popular. But he was also aggressive, and self-assertive. His dearest friends complained of this. He was the German equivalent of Carlyle. "The man," says Wieland, "is like an electric cloud. From a distance the meteor has a splendid effect; but may the d—— have such a meteor hanging over his head! I would like to have a dozen Pyrenees between him and me!"

The verdicts of Spencer, Mill, etc., on Carlyle!

IX

A Great Thought.

One excellent lesson he taught his countrymen. He took them aside from their barren admiration of poetic form, and bade them look for "great ideas." It is quite true that either rhythm or metre is at least a useful, if not essential, element in poetry; but in our degenerate days, when we have descended so far from the sublime spirit of ancient masterpieces, we have rushed into the heresy of sacrificing everything to mere form. Hence a mere jingle of words, strung together like nursery-rhymes, has often assumed the position in public estimation that should be occupied only by those sublime and intangible ideas that lift humanity above its commonplaces, and place it on the summit of the everlasting hills. It is quite true that perfect form, as a vehicle of thought, has not only a charm in itself, but also the vast utility of conveying in sweet and resonant language whatever we may have to communicate to the world. But no form, however perfect, is more than an empty, sounding shell, if the living idea is not there. For words are but the expression of ideas; and if the ideas be not great, the word is but a foolish and futile sound. Herder seemed to have been thoroughly interpenetrated with this great principle. His last words were:

"Give me a great thought before I die!"

X

Swinburne.

We have a very striking example of this in the greatest of our contemporary poets, Algernon Charles Swinburne, whose seventieth birthday is being celebrated as I write.

Swinburne is the supreme melodist of the language; the magician who makes music, as of Heaven, out of the discordant elements of the English tongue; the master of alliteration; the artist of antitheses; and the skilful portrayer of subtle and suggestive passion. He is our modern Greek. Where Keats, who built his Greek epics out of Plutarch and Spenser, taking his matter from the former, and his form from the latter, conspicuously but gloriously failed; where Landor fell short of Greek ideals and expression, although by some he was compared to Plato and Theocritus, Swinburne has succeeded. *Atalanta in Calydon* is the most perfect reproduction in modern times of the Greek spirit, Grecian thought, Greek dramatic force; and is probably the only modern exemplar to those uninitiated in Greek poetry of what the Greek spirit of art and the drama could produce. Why, then, is this harmonist, in an age of music; this melodist, in the age which has glorified Tennyson for his singing power; this Greek of Greeks, — so neglected in our age that his very name seems to be forgotten? The simple, quiet man, living over there with Watts-Dunton in Putney, so timid that he drops his hat in the presence of ladies; so kind that he fills his pockets on every walk with sweetmeats for children; why is he unknown, or only known, as the preacher of the sensuous and pagan life?

XI

The Verdict.

And the answer comes promptly, because he has been the preacher of sensuous paganism; and because he has given no message to his generation. The modern world, which tolerates Ibsen's realisms, and throngs the theatres

to see certain modern society dramas that seem to have escaped, as if by miracle, the censure of the Lord Chamberlain and the Police Commissioners, retains the Christian verdict delivered on Mr. Swinburne's poems in pre-pagan times. Forty years ago it was dogmatically decided that Mr. Swinburne should not be read. His poetry had too much of the atmosphere of Paphos for the public taste of those times. Public taste has changed, alas! not for the better; but public opinion, like a judge's sentence, seems unalterable. The verdicts passed by the tribunals of half a century ago remain; and it is tacitly taken for granted that Mr. Swinburne's poems are, at least, *virginibus puerisque*, unreadable. A few of his verses have escaped through the meshes of the anathema, as a singing bird will find his way through the meshes of a net; but all the rest is marked with the red and ochre of an *auto-da-fé*. Mr. Swinburne's poems are in quarantine. It is doubtful now if he ever can receive a bill of health.

XII

Atalanta in Calydon.

Yet that magnificent chorus in *Atalanta*, "Before the beginning of years," and the still more magnificent chorus on the Death of Meleager would tempt many more curious than careful to break the regulations of the health-office to get at the tainted beauties of other works. And they are not all tainted. There are a great many Swinburnian poems, unexcelled for music and rhythm, that may be read by any one. There are just two which, I think, are incomparable; and which may be read by those who still dread the yellow flag. The first is one of the finest ele-

gies in the language, — I do not exclude "Lycidas" or "Thyrsis." I do not include "Adonais," which is a tragedy rather than an elegy; and which seems to stand supreme and alone in poetry. It is the Elegy on the death of Barry Cornwall, commencing with the well-known lines:

"In the garden of death, where the singers whose names are deathless,
One with another make music unheard of men."

The other is the poem named "Child Laughter," a perfect piece of melody and purity of conception. It is in those lyrics that Mr. Swinburne's art is best manifested, as it is by his short lyrical notes that the music of Tennyson will be carried to the ears of posterity. Nature is greater than Art; and the ponderous efforts after great achievements in epic or drama are seldom so well appreciated as the spontaneous music that wells from the poetic heart in its moments of inspiration. And, above all in imitations of the antique, there is the certain tendency to miss its aerial lightness and softness of touch, and to degenerate into a lumbering and stiff-mannered style. But our lyrical poetry is always graceful, because generally unencumbered save by a single thought.

XIII

A thought will here occur — why should our modern poets imitate so servilely the ancient masterpieces that even in the exact forms of Odes and Choruses they feel bound to copy their originals? It is quite reasonable that in sculpture the antique

Servile Imitation.

forms should be studied and even copied, because that is a fixed art, with stereotyped rules and principles that change not with years or manners, but remain as archetypal perfections unto all time. But poetry is the interpretation not of "the human form divine," but of something greater, namely, of all the moods and types, of all the thoughts and sensations, of all the passions and desires that sway or govern the human soul. And as these are as multiform and intense as the subjectivism of each individual allows, varying from the purely sensistic emotions of the hind up to the seraphic exaltation of the mystic, poetry as their interpretation must assume their forms, and break into as many outer shapes as human energy and invention can devise. Hence, we find modern poets straining ever and ever after new forms of verse; and it is a distinct triumph when some daring writer breaks away from consecrated forms, and dares to assume an originality that first paralyses by its audacity, and then, perhaps after many years, becomes the model, and its issue the classic to a new generation. It seems, then, a great mistake in modern writers to copy so servilely the great poetic masterpieces of Greece. *Autres temps, autres mœurs!* The ideas of one age are not the ideas of another. A great gulf yawns between the centuries, wherein are buried the religions, the cults, the manners and the passions of the past. Each century has its own record; each age, its characteristics; each race, its peculiar genius and tastes; and nothing is gained, but everything is lost by a slavish subservience to traditions. Shakspeare is great, because he broke away from the Unities, and dared to be original. Milton's *Samson*, admittedly the most perfect adaptation of

the Greek drama to Jewish ideals, is that one of his works which is least read. In France, Racine and Corneille retain the name of classics, but classics on the shelves. No modern Frenchman would tolerate their interminable speeches. In England, Talfourd's *Ion* is now unheard of; Tennyson's abortive dramas are waste paper. But lines from immortal lyrics, like the choruses in *Atalanta in Calydon*, and the songs from the *Princess* lilt on every tongue. And the little drama *Maud*, the author's favourite, shall ever be a favourite with the public, because it is un-Greek, un-Roman, un-classic in frame and form; because it is thoroughly English and modern, and the best expression of the Time-Spirit in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Hence, it was the greatest pity that Mr. Swinburne, who probably was as conversant with modern ideas and their trend towards pessimism and progress, and all the possibilities of poetry that lie hidden beneath the anguish of a too self-conscious age, should have elected to go back to the simple realism of Greek thought and Greek feeling, where there was absolutely no room for the play of that subjectivism which may be misleading in philosophy, but which certainly forms the central attractiveness in most of the emotional poetry of the Victorian era.

XIV

I do not know whether it is our Oriental origin that makes us think not only lightly, but lovingly of death; but it is quite certain that we cannot view it with all the attendant horrors with which the modern materialistic imagination surrounds it; nor yet with that

Death with Dignity.

mute despair as of an inevitable event in the resistless march of Nature. We do not weave garlands of flowers through his naked ribs; nor wreathe his bony head with chaplets. But we like to think of dying with dignity, — of passing away, like the legendary king, surrounded by weeping queens, and launching out into the great deep without fear or terror of what shall hap to us there. And hence, we like every word that assures us of immortality, and that lends to our last great act on the stage of life something that will redeem our bodily indignities in the grave. And I like these solemn words, that remind one of the calm nobility of Socrates:

"The same year calls, and one goes hence with another,
And men sit sad that were glad for their sweet song's sake,
The same year beckons, and elder with younger brother
Takes mutely the cup from his hands that we all shall take."

"Takes mutely!" Quite so. Even the grim executioner, like him who handed the hemlock to Socrates, must drop a tear over his victim.

XV

A Child-Poem.

The other poem is a child-poem; for it may surprise some to be told that Mr. Swinburne is the children's poet *par excellence*. Is there not the sound of bells and laughter in these well-known lines?

"All the bells of heaven may ring,
All the birds of heaven may sing!
All the wells on earth may spring,
All the winds on earth may bring
All sweet sounds together.

Sweeter far than all things heard,
Hand of harper, tone of bird,
Sounds of woods at sundawn stirred,
Welling waters' winsome word,
Wind in warm, wan weather,"
etc., etc.

and in this:

"'Of such is the kingdom of heaven.'
No glory that ever was shed
From the crowning star of the seven
That crown the north-world's head,

"No word that ever was spoken
Of human or godlike tongue,
Gave ever such godlike token
Since human hearts were strung."

And surely the pen that wrote the two last stanzas in "A Child's Sleep" should never have been dipped in gall:

"As the moon on the lake's face flashes,
So haply may gleam at whiles
A dream through the dear deep lashes
Whereunder a child's eye smiles,

"And the least of us all that love him
May take for a moment part
With angels around and above him,
And I find a place in his heart."

Here is the jingling of musical bells; and a very beautiful and spiritual sense of childhood's charms, even though the two last lines of the first stanza ring leaden.

XVI

But, with all its music, Mr. Swinburne's poetry has the one great defect that it conveys no lesson,

teaches no truth, gives us no great ideas to help us along the summits of life, and keep us from sinking into the valleys. In our days the poet is a prophet, as well as a psalmist, or — nothing. His functions changed from those of mere verbal artist, as in the days of Dryden and Pope, to the introspection and melancholy of Goethe and Byron, until, after the lapse of half a century of neglect and contempt, Wordsworth again raised them to the high position of prophetic insight into the workings of the human heart, and its eternal sympathies and correspondencies with Nature. "High Priest of Nature" was he; and in his wake followed Browning with his lofty optimism, and Tennyson with his elaborate philosophy of pantheistic doubtings. And there is not the least use of any writer of prose or verse coming before the public now unless he has a message to his generation. And that message must be one of purity and of hope. No matter how sunken men may be in vice,—and our age is not an immaculate one,—the souls of men recoil from the brutish philosophy of Lucretius, from the secret indecencies of Ovid and Petronius. It may revolt against the sweet and pure teachings of Christ, but it will not go back to Cytherea. Mr. Swinburne would have been well advised had he read in all its significance that valedictory addressed to Heine from the marble lips of the Venus in the Louvre:

No Message.

"How can I help you? Cannot you see that I have lost both my arms?"

XVII

Now, Mr. Swinburne has no message, unless it be a suggestion of Paphian rites; no gospel, except

what is contained in "Laus Veneris" and the "Hymn to Proserpine."[1] Possibly he has seen by this time that his revolutionary heroes were made of pasteboard, and that his dreams of an "Italia Nuova" have not been realised. Carlyle grew tired of Mazzini as ineffectual, and the verdict of such a foe to Catholicism is probably now the verdict of Mr. Swinburne on the wily Ligurian. Take, then, the revolutionary songs away, ill-adapted as they are to modern ideas, and measure his erotic poetry even by such low standards as modern ethics will allow, and there remains to Mr. Swinburne the reputation of being the most marvellous *jongleur* with the English tongue that has yet appeared on English soil, and the best interpreter of Greek thought to moderns. But few moderns care for Greek thought, fewer still for that peculiar phase of Greek thought which no other modern poet has dared to reproduce.

But of Paphos.

[1] Whilst these notes were passing through the Press, I was reminded that in repeating the common verdict on Mr. Swinburne's poems, I should have added that it is quite possible that the public might have drifted into its not unusual error of judging the entire work of a poet by that very portion which he himself might possibly consider the least representative of his genius. Mr. Swinburne's position as the greatest of living poets is unassailable, but even the gods may wince under injustice; and it is only fair to say that the keenest and most comprehensive of modern critics refuse to accept "Poems and Ballads" (1866–1878) written in Mr. Swinburne's youth, and containing nearly all the erotic poetry he has published, as the finest flower and characteristic of his genius; and they would probably challenge the title "Poet of Human Love" in favor of "Poet of Humanity." But, as I am a profound disbeliever in the utility of waiting for the just judgments of posterity, I think it is a pity that it is not generally known that it has been authoritatively stated that Mr. Swinburne would elect to be judged by his larger and maturer work, rather than by those early conceits and unbalanced enthusiasms of his youth.

XVIII

Aloof.

We meet him but seldom in the records of contemporaries. He does not appear to have touched the circle within which Carlyle, Ruskin, and Tennyson moved. His closest friend appears to have been the late famous master of Balliol, Professor Jowett. He was the Professor's constant companion in their Highland vacations; and we meet him frequently at Tummel Bridge, drinking strong tea, and enlivening the reading party by recitations from Charles Dickens. Extremes meet in most men, but I do not know that I ever experienced such a shock as when I read that the author of "Erechtheus" and the "Hymn to Proserpine" did actually and habitually, and with forethought, impersonate Sairey Gamp.

XIX

No Hero-worship.

Once or twice during his long life he has appeared before the public as protagonist of an idea, or in self-defence. In the first capacity he hurled back with Titanic strength the violent charges that were made by Robert Buchanan against "the fleshly school." In the second he repudiated, with the "scorn of scorn" of which a poet alone is capable, the dedicatory poem written to him on his birthday by Eric Mackay. It is a pretty story. The poem was ecstatic in its adoration of Mr. Swinburne. The closing stanza ran thus:

> "But Hate absorbs thee not; thy theme is Love,
> And all the joys and all the griefs thereof,

And all the marvels which the years unfold.
Thy hand is strong; thy lute-strings are of gold.
And thou, too, as Chaucer did in years gone by,
Canst wake the world to wonder and delight,
And through the courts and corridors of Fame
Canst make thy voice ring out by day and night
In full-toned ecstasies of earth and sky.
Thou hast for badge a star, for faith a flame,
And for thy meed the halo of a name.
Thy peers are with the dead who cannot die."

Here will be noticed symptoms of that highest admiration, imitation. The poem appeared in "The World" of April 4, 1894. Copies were sent to Mr. Swinburne and a friend. No reply or acknowledgment. Three months passed; still no reply. Nine months elapsed. Then Eric Mackay wrote as an aggrieved one. Reply this time:

"Mr. Swinburne begs to inform Mr. Mackay — whose name is unknown to him — that he did receive the number of 'The World' inquired about; and is happy to learn that the lines inscribed to him, which appeared in it, will not reappear under that inscription."

Mr. Mackay wrote back, regretting that Mr. Swinburne was no gentleman, and hinting that a little personal chastisement would, etc., etc. Reply from Lewis and Lewis, solicitors, to the effect that, if Mr. Mackay continued the correspondence, the intervention of the police would be requisitioned. *Tableau!*

XX

Mr. Swinburne is one of the few great poets of our time who has also ventured into prose. Whether Tennyson and Browning consulted best for their after fame by

His Prose.

limiting their work to poetry is a moot question. But there is no law binding a great writer to limitations of this kind, although eventually, if he escapes oblivion, he must take his choice in the Temple of Fame as prose-writer or poet. No man can occupy two niches, where the space is narrow and already overcrowded. Carlyle ventured into poetry, which no one reads, although, as we have said elsewhere, his "Mason-song" is far finer than its original, the "Symbolum" of Goethe. Tennyson wrote a little prose, chiefly in connection with his "Idylls." It is unknown, or forgotten. It is true that Shelley may be remembered by his "Letters," when many of his poems are blotted out from public memory; and Macaulay's "Lays" may yet constitute his chief claim to immortality. But, as a rule, men are judged by one species of work. The world will not acknowledge Michael Angelo to have been a supreme poet, because it acknowledges him supreme artist. It is chary of praise, economic in worship. It will only pay for one claim.

XXI

Too Emphatic.

But it seems quite certain now that Mr. Swinburne will owe whatever of fame is meted out to him by posterity to his merits as poet. As critic or essayist he cannot be taken seriously, for he has carried into all his writings a passion for extreme opinion, which is best described as "vehement and volcanic." Here he beats even Carlyle hollow. He has a command of vituperative language that quite equals that of the Chelsea scold; and he is more indiscriminate in his abuse, as he is more lavish in his praise. Carlyle

praised no man; or did it always with damnatory restrictions and objections. Mr. Swinburne's adulation is as frantic as his vituperation. Whoever has read his preface to the poems of S. T. Coleridge or his multitudinous essays on Victor Hugo will easily understand this. With these poets there are no limitations. Everything is in the superlative — no equals, no rivals! And yet in his criticism on "Lear," he seems to have heard that there was a man called Shakspeare, and that he lived long before Victor Hugo, and is likely to live long after the exile of Guernsey has been forgotten. Well; one can excuse enthusiasm; but is there an excuse for calling Mark Pattison "an ape of the Dead Sea"? It was a pretty asset of Carlyle's — that word "ape." "Called to see that ape, Keble, author of a book, 'The Christian Year.'" But it is hardly polite. And what shall we think of this pious sentiment regarding Constable and Bannatyne, who were the causes, innocent perhaps, of Scott's bankruptcy:

"It is a comfort to remember that their place in Hell is now between Heming and Condell."

Surely vituperative madness is not altogether confined to the Celt.

XXII

And, if Mr. Swinburne has chosen to write of the "ramping renegades or clattering corsairs" of Byron; of his "violent and vulgar resources of cant and rant and glare and splash and splutter;" of his "sickly stumble of drivelling debility," his "drawling draggletail drab of a muse, Inyx, the screaming wry-neck";

Tantaene Irae?

he must not complain, if he is said by another writer "to pile butter upon bacon, and honey on sugar, driving the aching sense to nausea with the dead, inevitable beat of the rhythm, and the irritating recurrence of alliteration and assonance. He seems a sort of poetic Blondin, keeping perilous foothold on an imperceptible wire in mid-air, and surrounded by blazing coruscations of rockets and crackers."

Such are the amenities among the gods, O ye mortals!

XXIII

Loch Torridon.

I notice that the best of Mr. Swinburne's poems are un-Swinburnian, — that is, they are not recognisable as Mr. Swinburne's owing to the absence of alliteration and superlatives. Here is a lovely little bit from "Loch Torridon":

> "All night long, in the world of sleep
> Skies and waters were soft and deep.
> Shadow clothed them, and silence made
> Soundless music of dream and shade.
> All above us, the livelong night
> Shadow, kindled with sense of light;
> All around us, the brief night long
> Silence, laden with sense of song.
> Stars and mountains without, we knew,
> Watched and waited the soft night through.
> All unseen, but divined and dear
> Thrilled the touch of the sea's breath near;
> All unheard, but alive, like sound,
> Throbbed the sense of the sea's life round;
> Round us, near us, in depth and height,
> Soft as darkness, and keen as light."

XXIV

Have I said that Swinburne has no message to mankind? Well, here suddenly am I confronted with a new theory, — namely, that he is the preacher of the most "exalted ethical idealism;" that "he is, like Victor Hugo, in exceptional nearness to the Divine element in the universe, the element that makes for love, pity, purity, in fact, for holiness." "The essential attitudes of the Christian temper," says Mr. W. M. Payne of *The Dial*, Chicago, "receive Swinburne's fullest sympathy, save only the meek and lowly attitude, upon which he pours out the vials of his scorn. The proud exaltation of the full-statured soul is the key to Swinburne's ethics through its close relation to his conception of duty, and his strenuous demand for complete sacrifice of self." "Victor Hugo and Swinburne are both primarily spiritual poets, — poets of exalted spiritual passion."

Another View.

XXV

The English language must have undergone a tremendous revolution when words like these could be used by rational beings of the most sensuous poetry in the English tongue. But criticism, like history, has run wild. When such amiable beings as Cromwell, Nero, Danton, Mirabeau, etc., are deified in history, we cannot be surprised when, in the eternal jugglery of words, "physical" and "moral," "sensual" and "spiritual," "Christian" and "Pagan" are interchanged, and assumed to be synonymous.

Criticism run Mad.

A newspaper critic, like a lawyer, can prove anything. Nay, not prove, but assert; and assert just where there is no peril of contradiction or disproof. But the world does not take such persons seriously. It may repent of its early indiscretions, or oblivion, or stupidity, in the case of such a poet as Wordsworth; but it never stamps poetry as sensuous or suggestive without adhering to the verdict.

XXVI

A Selection.

Hence the best that can now be done for Swinburne is to make a judicious selection of his best poems, and give these to the public. No poet should ask for more. No poet can be remembered in our fast age, when such excellent verse is poured out so lavishly in every magazine, except by one or two poems, which have fastened on the public fancy. The day may come when Tennyson will be known only by one or two lyrics, and perhaps "In Memoriam." And if Mr. Swinburne survives, twenty years hence, as the author of one or two great choral odes, he should thank his stars, and be content with such a modicum of fame. But here again lies the secret of his non-success. He has been the melodious psalmist of forbidden things, but he has given no great thought, no lofty line to the world. Shall we describe him, as another poet limns himself, as

> "The idle singer of an empty day;"

or shall we say that he should have been poet-laureate to the Sultan, or national bard to Lydians or Cypriotes? But the Goths of the North, with

their eyes darkened from city-fogs or sea-mists, and who are for ever seeking for new gospels, and not finding them, have nothing in common with this Southern singer, who, like his goddess Cytherea, seems to have sprung from a purple and enchanted sea.

XXVII

Redeeming Lines.

And yet, even if we suppose that Mr. Swinburne has misdirected his splendid powers, it must be confessed that he has left some noble lines, some delightful verses that men will not permit to die. The grand criterion of immortality is to pass from the printed page to the mouths of the people. When suddenly a line or a passage leaps to the lips, it is a sign that it has gone down into the heart and made its mansion there. I make no doubt that hundreds have committed to memory, for daily use and enjoyment, the chorus in *Atalanta in Calydon*. I know that I never see the sea breaking into surf on the seashore, but the magnificent Alexandrine comes to my lips:

"Where the thundering Bosphorus echoes the thunder of Pontic seas."

And for forty years I have never witnessed the entrancing sight of night, stooping down on the sea with its hanging clusters of stars, without thinking of the words:

> "And with stars and sea-winds in her raiment
> Night sinks on the sea."

Section II

XXVIII

Goethe's *Symbolum.*

Apropos of great lines and great thoughts in our poets, I make no apology for inserting here these words of Goethe's (which many will seek in vain in all the selections of Goethe's "Gedichte" that have been given to the world), which are well known, or perhaps I should say ought to be well known, through Carlyle's translation. Goethe calls the poem *Symbolum.* It is found in the series "Loge," in the sixth volume of Goethe's collected works.[1]

Symbolum.

Des Maurers Wandeln	The mason's ways are
Es gleicht dem Leben	A type of existence,
Und sein Bestreben	And his persistence
Es gleicht dem Handeln	Is as the ways are
Der Menschen auf Erden.	Of men in this world.
Die Zukunft decket	The Future hides in it
Schmerzen und Glücke	Gladness and Sorrow.
Schrittweis dem Blicke	We press still thorough,
Doch ungeschrecket	Nought that abides in it
Dringen wir vorwärts.	Daunting us; onward!
Und schwer und schwerer	And forward before us
Hängt eine Hülle	Gleams the dark portal,
Mit Ehrfurcht Stille	Goal of all mortal.
Ruhn oben die Sterne	Stars silent rest o'er us,
Und unten die Gräber.	Graves under us, silent.
Betracht sie genauer	While earnest thou gazest
Und siehe, so melden	Comes boding of terror,
Im Busen der Helden	Comes phantasm and error,
Sie Wandelnde Schauer	Perplexes the bravest
Und ernste Gefühle.	With doubt and misgiving.

[1] Goethe's Werke, Band 6. Stuttgart, 1857.

Doch rufen von drüben	But heard are the Voices,
Die Stimmen der Geister,	Heard are the Sages,
Die Stimmen der Meister,	The worlds and the ages.
Versaümt nicht zu üben	Choose well! Your choice is
Die Kräfte des Guten!	Brief, but yet endless.
Hier winden sich Kronen	Here eyes do regard you
In ewiger Stille,	From eternity's stillness.
Die sollen mit Fülle	Here is all fulness
Die Thätigen lohnen!	Ye brave, to reward you.
Wir heissen euch hoffen!	Work, and despair not!

The strange thing about this poem is, that Carlyle's translation is far more suggestive and spirited than the original. Carlyle was a poet without the song-gift; but here he seems to have struck suddenly upon a lyrical sermon, which he was fond of repeating, especially the last line: *We bid you be of hope!*

XXIX

Was it because he felt himself so utterly "without hope in this world" that he was always trying to summon courage by such words? It may be said that Carlyle lived the last forty years of his life in despair. That last expression of his to Froude: "God does nothing!" is his valedictory and death-bed profession of utter hopelessness. All the hysterical screaming of forty years has died down into that feeble burr of despair. As preacher and reformer, he had been as utter a failure as the Edward Irving on whom he lavished such pitying contempt. To all human seeming, he had been a successful man. The ordinary accompaniments of a serene and honourable old age — wealth, fame, honour, troops of friends, — were his. And yet he sank into his lonely grave, not only with the *Vanitas Vanitatum* of the preacher on his

Carlyle.

lips, but with a keen sense of disappointment that his mission had been a failure. He had conquered the world so far as the world's lip-service was concerned, only to find that the captive hugged its chains and refused the offer of emancipation.

XXX

Early Heroic Days.

There is a line of demarcation drawn across Carlyle's life, marking off whatever was great and noble in it from all that was hysterical and affected,— a line as marked and obvious as that which distinguishes adolescence and senility in most men, only in Carlyle's case the contrast was reversed. Wisdom and serenity were not the fruitage or heritage of his years. There is something really magnificent in his early life. Born in humble circumstances, the son of a Scotch mason, and stricken early in life with ill-health, he yet believed that a revelation was made to him that he was a child of genius, and that the world outside — the dim, blind, stammering world — would, sooner or later, acknowledge the fact, and come bowing to his feet. It was his belief in his star of destiny, — the faith that genius always inspires, and that helps to surmount every obstacle towards its development and fulfilment. These early days in Ecclefechan, when he consumed his evening meal of bread and milk on the top of the stone fence outside his father's dwelling, and saw visions as of Patmos; the dreary hours in the little school at Annan, brightened and darkened once only by the presence of Irving; the opening up of life when he was transferred to Kirkcaldy; that evening on Drumclog Moss, when, after a long vacation walk, he and Irving stood still and talked

about the eternal truths, and saw the parting of their ways; the hours in his scanty lodgings in Edinburgh, toiling over Legendre's Geometry, teaching the young Bullers, whose tuition (ranked in money value at £200 a year) Irving's brotherly solicitude had obtained for him; or writing furtive articles for the "Edinburgh Review," which were not even acknowledged, and for Brewster's "Encyclopædia," which were most frugally and economically paid for; his lonely hours at Mainhill, Hoddam Hill, and Scotsbrig; his romantic marriage and subsequent eremitical life amidst the "Druidical Solitudes" of Craigenputtock; the burning of the ships and embarking for London; his uphill fight against poverty and neglect; his fearlessness, his manliness, his independence; his contempt for money, society, social rank, and everything the human heart holds dear; his gradual emergence into the light of public recognition through every kind of Cimmerian gloom and adamantine opposition, — the whole is a grand epic, in which you cannot hear the clash of arms or the shout of victory, but the more noble heart-throbs of a great spirit, warring against untoward circumstances, beaten down, submerged, almost extinguished, but finally victorious, not through adventitious help or eleemosynary assistance, but by virtue of its own indomitable energy and invincible determination.

XXXI

An Epic's Close.

But the epic suddenly closes there. The life-history of the man, made glorious by struggle and strain, now degenerates into a kind of complacent servility on the one hand, and furious defiance on the other, — both deeply resented by his dearest friends, and tolerated

by an easy public because atoned for by the glamour of genius. I do not know a more humiliating incident in the lives of great poets and teachers than that journey to Scotland under the patronage of Lady Ashburton, when Carlyle and his wife were huddled into a second-class compartment with her ladyship's servants, whilst her ladyship occupied an ex-royal saloon. Strange to say, Carlyle never saw the incongruity and degradation of the matter; nor has Mr. Froude seemed to observe it. Jane Welsh Carlyle resented it; and refused to return from Scotland under similar circumstances. I never read the incident without a blush of shame at seeing this child of genius, this strong spirit, carried like a valet, as merely one of her ladyship's suite. And, alas! no man ever wrote so bitterly, so savagely of the flunkey-soul.

XXXII

A Last Scene.

And then comes one of the last scenes. It is Mr. Smalley, the American retailer of small things, that tells it — how Carlyle, having returned from his night walk through Chelsea, and having consumed (dyspeptic as he was) vast chunks of plum-cake and bread and butter at tea, sat down on the floor, back to fireplace, took out a comb, brushed his white hair down over his eyes, lighted the long clay pipe, and treated his visitor to one tedious monologue of two hours' duration. The words sounded strangely familiar to his hearer. He went home and found the mighty monologue a mere recital of some old stale platitudes from essays on Chartism, or Latter-Day Pamphlets. "How are the mighty fallen!" And all those screech-owl letters

to newspapers, and all those maudlin letters to his "goody" (which she accused him for having written with a view to publication for posterity), and all those noisy declamations from the Apostle of Silence; and all his scorn for whatever is sweet, and beautiful, and sacred in life, — ah, me! how one does regret that he ever left his Hermitage, and fell under the spell of tongues more terrible than those for which he flung his pitying scorn on Edward Irving! And was Irving a subject for scorn? I trow not! Of the two men, Irving stands forth as the most lovable and honourable. If in genius he was of smaller stature, in true nobility of character he stands high above his great compatriot. His noble generosity to Carlyle, when the latter was a struggling teacher whilst Irving was an acknowledged master; his kind words: "Two Annan men must not be strangers here"; his free offer of the use of his library, an asset about which most men are jealously conservative; his honourable relinquishment of Jane Welsh in order that he might keep his engagement with the plain, muddy-complexioned Miss Martin; his loyal welcome to Carlyle in London; his pitiable illusions and painful reverses; his half-prophetic enthusiasm; his decline and fall from such transcendent heights as he had reached; and his noble equanimity under crushing adversity will bear comparison with the querulous, sad, unhappy life that, even though it were a cresset and beacon-fire to humanity, smouldered and crackled painfully to the end there in that dark house in Chelsea.

XXXIII

The Prophet's Place.

One could have wished that Carlyle had never left the solitudes of Scotland, but from perfect union with Nature, had received of the plenitude of her inspirations, and communicated it through his marvellous gift of language to the world. There would have been something akin to the circumstances and surroundings of the prophets, who choose stony deserts or barren mountains for their residences, in his selection of the brown moors and tors of a Scottish highland as the place of his meditations on those problems of existence that loomed up vague, shadowy, but colossal before the eyes of the young sage and scholar. For clearly, from the moment he began to think, life and not how to live was the transcendent question for Carlyle. "The hush of the world's expectation as the day died" was a Hebrew speech to him, even as a child. How the further glories of the universe broke on his imagination, and how the cryptic handwriting of Nature became a life-torturing puzzle to him, we can well imagine. How the world would have listened and wondered and admired, if those after-revelations of his had come out from the desert on the wings of a prophetic voice, and not from the dust of a London hall or the fogs of the Chelsea embankment.

XXXIV

His Letters.

He must have carried to London in 1834 something of his Scottish atmosphere of energy and virility, and drawn largely on this storehouse of native power and native independence for a few years. But then there

was a visible decline. "The French Revolution" touched the high-water mark of his genius. In "Heroes and Hero-worship" the tide came to a standstill. Once again, in "Past and Present," there was an effort, a *tour de force*, as of one who felt the power slipping away from him, and thence a steady decadence downwards through dreary jeremiads and hysterical shriekings to the end. Carlyle's letters from 1814–1826 may yet come to be regarded not only as valuable biographical helps, but as the best indications of his genius. There are passages in those letters, descriptive and metaphorical, which he has not surpassed; and assuredly the great work wrought out in pain and conflict amidst the terrific desolation of Craigenputtock will be the last of Carlyle's writings that will fail to grasp the admiration and attention of the world.

XXXV

The one forecast or indication of what Carlyle was to become in later years is a certain fickleness of judgment, as when in one letter he styles Goethe "the greatest genius that has lived for a century, and the greatest ass that has lived for three. I could sometimes fall down and worship him; at other times I could kick him out of the room."[1] And again of "Wilhelm Meister": "A book which I love not, which I am sure will never sell, but which I am determined to print and finish. There are touches of the very highest, most ethereal genius in it; but diluted with floods of insipidity, which even *I* would not have written for the world. Some of the poetry is very bad,

His Fickleness.

[1] Letters, vol. ii. p. 224.

some of it rather good. The following is mediocre — the *worst kind*." Readers of Carlyle will be amazed to find those words written of verses which he afterwards quoted so frequently and with such enthusiasm :

> "Who never ate his bread in sorrow,
> Who never spent the darksome hours
> Weeping, and watching for the morrow, —
> He knows you not, ye gloomy Powers."

XXXVI

A Worshipper.

And in his letters to Goethe there is a symptom of the servility and adulation to the great ones of the earth, which afterwards alternated painfully with such fierce assertions of independence. Reading those letters now in

> "The dark backward and abysm of Time,"

one cannot help feeling a sudden shudder of pain at expressions of admiration and flattery which might not be out of place in some second-rate poetaster craving for patronage at some nobleman's door, but which seem fulsome and undignified coming from the pen of one who aspired to be seer and prophet to his generation. I have never seen anything like it in the writings of the masters of literature. In the vast correspondence of Goethe himself, there is either a perfect equipoise of dignified serenity, or else a lordly condescension that seems to dwarf into a mere pupil the greater genius that wrote from the silences and loneliness of Craigenputtock.

XXXVII

Besides the natural decadence of power that followed Carlyle's introduction to London society, and his assumption of a dictatorship which the world would not acknowledge, there was one cause mentioned by a close observer, Mr. Larkin, which operated powerfully towards the disintegration of Carlyle's powers, and the development of that morbid irritability which alienated such friends as Herbert Spencer and John Stuart Mill, and that large body of admirers whose principles, rudely attacked by Carlyle, compelled them to abandon belief in his inerrancy. This cause was his secret ambition, kindled by the momentary success of his political works, to get into Parliament, and thence unto some coign of vantage as minister, whence he could mould the minds and destinies of at least large sections of the population to his own peculiar views. For he verily believed he was a God-sent man, — an apostle to a generation stiff of neck and hard of heart and slow of comprehension, and that he alone of all men saw the clear way to make straight the way of the Lord.

His Ambition.

XXXVIII

He seemed to pivot all his hopes on the statesman, Sir Robert Peel, whom he firmly believed he had converted to his opinions on many public questions. There had been, too, a little informal *rapprochement* between the statesman and the writer; and some expressions of mutual esteem. Then destiny — the destiny that

His Hopes.

was always thwarting Carlyle, and which he believed he had strength to conquer and defy, interfered. Sir Robert Peel was killed by a fall from his horse; and Carlyle's political dreams vanished. Both political parties, representing for the most part the sane common-sense of Britain, shrank from association with such an iconoclast. Their great organs, quarterly, monthly, daily, refused his fiery denunciations of anything and everything under the sun. They feared probably that such a man, inflated with all the adulation of the empty heads of London, would order the Speaker from the chair, as he went very near ordering the preacher from the pulpit on the only occasion on which he visited St. Paul's.

XXXIX

Degenerate.

Thenceforth Carlyle seems to have lost all self-control. The humour, grim though it was, that pervaded "Sartor" and the story of Abbot Samson, and the French Revolution, grew into the savage denunciation with which he lashed, like Swift, all opponents. The poetical faculty, which he certainly possessed, although he lacked the ear for metre or rhyme, and which constitutes the great charm of his early letters and writings, seems to have degenerated into a kind of fiery rhetoric, that scorched and withered instead of fostering and embalming; and the sage of Chelsea became, to all observers who could get beyond the glamour of a great name, "the bad-tempered old gentleman, who called down God's lightning from heaven every time he could not lay his hand upon his match-box."[1]

[1] Lowell.

XL

There are two terrific trials in the life of every great thinker — and Carlyle experienced them, but did not come out of them "the strong athlete" of whom the author of "The Imitation" speaks. These are to live a divine life amidst all that is squalid and ignoble; and to accept in silence a lower and subordinate place beneath the futilities and imbecilities which, through interest, cunning, or intrigue are enthroned in the high places of the earth. There is a third, namely, the trial of a high, pure soul, in the grasp of malignant imbecility, powerless to free itself, loathing its master, but impotent to dethrone him. From time to time certain souls feel themselves called to a higher life. Whether the inspiration comes from hereditary influences, home training, extensive reading, or from on high, they feel themselves constrained to depart from the beaten track of men, and to walk alone on the eternal hills whilst their every-day, lower existence is still cast amongst the commonplaces and wretched banalities of the work-a-day world. It is the strenuous life, straining after great things; but it is one full of trials to the spirit. It is a way of desolation, but not of darkness, a way of visible trials, but invisible helps. Many start forward in the course. Few attain the goal. Fewer still the *bravium*, or reward.

Two Trials.

XLI

Their great temptation and obstruction is — that they make themselves the "heroes of their own epic." They become self-absorbed. This is not conducive to humility; and the humble alone succeed. Such souls must learn to live heroic lives without a hero. They must be content with the fruits of the spirit, without hanging them, like apples of the Hesperides, on every tree. They must think in prose, not in the long roll of the hexameter. They must be content to live unknown, and die unnoticed. For the breath of human worship and applause will stain the white mirror of their shields; and if every one wants to examine with his soiled fingers the brand, Excalibur, very soon will its edge be dulled, and the mystic letters will vanish. In the solitude of their own thoughts, in the silence and reserve of the spirit, must such souls wear out the days of life, content to know that they are *electæ ex millibus*, chosen out of thousands by some arbitrary, but unerring decree.

And Temptations.

XLII

The second and third classes of souls, conscious of their own integrity and greatness, chafe under the dominion of imbecilities. It may be the unfitness, the deordination of things that exasperates them; or it may be that wounded pride, which must needs be compelled to suffer and endure much at the mercy of hands that are feeble, but too prone to smite. For a time there is sullen discontent, hidden rebellious feelings,

Law is Law.

murmurings at such a disposition of things which seems to run counter to all order and proportion. Then comes the end — either open rebellion, or the swift abandonment of some high calling, that the destinies determined should be pursued right through the teeth of every discouragement or obstruction. There is the tacit and mute forgetfulness of that which should never be forgotten — that Law is Law; and that the administration of law is placed most often in the hands of the imbecile or malignant, who nevertheless must be obeyed, for their charter comes from the High Powers, that work in mysteries, and whose reasons or designs it is not given to man to fathom.

XLIII

The Chariots of Life.

It is a question whether the chariots of life could best be guided by the noble and wise in every generation. For guidance requires knowledge and experience; and knowledge and experience are very often destructive of nobility of character. Even a *chauffeur* requires training. And as the *chauffeur* must know every curve, and rut, and sweep in the road he is travelling, so the charioteer, who guides a State, or a department, must know every foible or weakness, or eccentricity in that little section of humanity committed to his care. But with that knowledge, especially if it come from experience, there will arise, too, a certain contempt, even though it be wrapped in the fair garments of mercy and charity. And there is no greater solvent of nobility of soul than even the incipient feeling of contempt. There never yet was

a ruler who held a firm hand to the end. Like unwearied Nature, each seeks his goal through the lines of least resistance.

XLIV

Charioteers.

When, therefore, thinkers, like Carlyle, are quietly ignored and set aside by those who have the appointment of Councillors of State, or heads of departments in their hands, they have no reason to complain. The author of *The Advancement of Learning* and the *Essays* was not a success as a Lord Chancellor. The light that was to stream forever unto all future generations was obscured in a court of law. Making all allowance for Lord Macaulay's unsparing denunciation as a piece of wanton rhetoric, and not a judicial examination of an obscure and complicated case, there can be no doubt that Lord Bacon does not come out of the ordeal with clean hands. But it was the circumstances that surrounded him which were really responsible for his apostasy from honour, not the native character of the man. A philosopher has no business in a law court, nor in a House of Lords. In his study, he soars aloft and contemplates humanity from the summit of his science. If he descends to closer and more practical relations, humanity drags him down to its own level, and beneath it.

XLV

A Fine Expression.

I have just stumbled upon one of those tremendous expressions uttered, or written as if by a careless hand, but which seem to make one's heart stand still, and hold one's breath by reason of their sublimity.

The sentence occurs in the "Recollections of Mary Somerville," and runs thus:

"The perturbations (of the Solar system) are only the oscillations of that immense Pendulum of Eternity, which beats centuries as ours beats seconds."

Did the authoress, great as she was, see the awful import of these words? They are written haphazard at the end of a chapter; and they close a paragraph, commencing with Newton's doubt of the permanence of our solar system, and La Grange's confidence in its stability, inasmuch as these disturbances were periodical, and arose from the reciprocal attraction of the planets and their satellites. But Mrs. Somerville always prided herself on her severe style, as most in accordance with the science she illustrated so admirably; and I see from Lord Brougham's letters to her, and from her great French correspondents, that this was a peculiarity on which they highly complimented her. How, then, did she lose and forget herself for the moment, and break into those lines that I thought could be written by no pen but Jean Paul's?

XLVI

"The Pendulum of Eternity."

The Pendulum of Eternity! I can hear the swift, ceaseless ticking of the watch in my pocket; the slower beat of the clock on my mantel-piece; the still more solemn sound of the hall-clock; the grave steady beat of the sacristy-clock, that has swung to and fro for nigh a century; the still slower swing of the town-hall clock, that seems a fitting accompaniment to the deep boom of its bells; but where is

the "Pendulum of Eternity"? In what vast unknown, undreamt-of spaces in the great immensity does it swing its gigantic bulk? Between what constellations does it oscillate, and set in motion those wheels and springs in the mighty void that we call systems, and of which our suns and planets are but the golden rivets? Take your pen and write — The clocks of earth move but a *Second* under the swing of their pendulums; but every beat in the Pendulum of Eternity marks a *Century!* Put it down in figures, and contrast them. Then you may understand what the poet means when he says his clock

"Beats out the little lives of men."

XLVII

A Cataclysm.

But mark the minor words "perturbations," "oscillations." They are the mere tremulous and momentary shudder of the gigantic mechanism, that moves in sublime and eternal silence through the dark fields of space, just as my clock trembles and vibrates a little at the music of the gong that strikes the hours. And yet — mark the terror of the thing! Earthquakes, volcanoes, tidal waves, suddenly swallowing up thousands and tens of thousands of pigmy men, tumbling stately cities into masses of shapeless ruin, blotting out landmarks, and, in the wake of that momentary shudder, dragging the fierce demon of Fire to complete its work, staggering the minds of civilisation, until men begin to grow dazed and confused with terror. Ah, yes! I touch with my foot the anthill, and break down the work of generations, whilst the startled insects run to and fro. And there

is just one little swerve in the diurnal motion of the earth; and the anthills of men come tumbling into ruin and the little, vain, but eternally plastic creature stands appalled at the phenomenon, before he commences, with unerring instinct, to plan and build again.

XLVIII

Come, bury or burn those corpses at once. Work has to be done. Don't you see how the planets swing on in ceaseless music and serenity; and old Earth moves round utterly regardless of the destruction she has caused by that one little jar and shudder on her surface? Come, bury those bodies! Why cumber they the ground? A thousand, ten thousand, twenty thousand — it makes no matter whatsoever! The Universe is indifferent. That slight departure from the smooth and even perfection in which the planets move, as if each glided along in a perfect groove, only emphasises the beauty and grandeur of that eternal motion and flux of things that goes on under the names of diurnal and annual movements. If we were not made conscious from time to time of some slight discord in the eternal harmony of things, we should soon become heedless or incredulous about the latter. A jarring note is sometimes introduced by a great master to accentuate the finished perfection of fugue or sonata. And if sometimes the Earth did not shiver in its course, we might forget that she does not stand still, but swings in inconceivable velocity in her destined path through the infinities of space.

The Indifference of the Universe.

XLIX

Stars and Graves.

But these little fragments and remnants of shattered humanity must be gathered up somehow, in coffin or casket, in basket or tumbril, and hidden away. Their sudden and awful dissolution is part of the programme — one of the little accidents of the universe — an incident, and a small one in the vast history of ephemeral things. And strange to say, men seem to heed such things quite as little as blind, mechanical nature. A paragraph for a day or two in a morning paper, with some large type and notes of exclamation — and that is all! In a week all is forgotten. The busy, plastic little creatures are already at work, clearing away *débris*, laying new foundations, planning new streets, mapping new thoroughfares, determined to pile a new Tower of Babel on the ruins of the old. The comet that caused that slight deflection in the earth's axis, has sped streaming into space; or Saturn or Jupiter that developed too much energy is calmly looking down from the eternal heights. There is magnificent silence and indifference everywhere. And the graves of the martyred thousands are also silent.

"Ruhn oben die Sterne,
Und unten die Gräber." [1]

L

Contrasts of Life.

Nothing surprises me more than the contrasts of life. I notice that sometimes a little circumstance that passes unheeded and ineffectual in every-day life, becomes suddenly magnified in a certain junc-

[1] Stars silent rest o'er us,
Graves, under us, silent.

ture of accidents into an event of vast importance. And the most trivial offence against morality, which perhaps for generations has passed unheeded, suddenly develops into a crime, which receives exemplary but disproportionate punishment. But these singular contrasts are in no wise so manifested as in the estimate that is placed by men on human life. Here in the wards of a hospital is a little child whose life is imperilled in the grip of some dire disease. Lights are lowered; footfalls are made inaudible by slippers of felt; night and day, a skilled and trained nurse never leaves that bedside; grave doctors come in three or four times a day, examine with knitted brows the diaries or noctaries of the nurses — pulsations, temperature, food, liquids, the action of medicines; develop furious tempers if there is the slightest appearance of neglect; anxiously consult with one another; open heavy tomes for new lights; go away perturbed; return with deeper furrows on their foreheads; and all this science and skill and zeal — to save that little thread of life that vibrates in that tiny child.

LI

A Defeat.

And if death intervenes doctors and nurses feel that they are defeated and shamed. They pass by that little waxen figure with averted eyes and downcast heads. Death is the victor, and he waves his black flag in derision above their heads. There was *life*, — life in its most humble and tiniest form, and they have failed to save it. Yet those same doctors will pass from the bedside of that child where they fought such a desperate battle, and, taking up the morning newspaper in the hospital surgery, read with perfect

composure and little interest of twenty thousand lives lost in a tidal wave in Japan, or a thousand lives lost in a South American earthquake, or a regiment or two blown to atoms suddenly by a concealed mine in some mad human conflict. How do you explain it? Professional honour? No. That won't do. Honour is not at stake. They have done all that men can do. Tenderness for that child? No, alas! The cases are too common; and tenderness vanishes through familiarity. And they don't allude to honour; and they don't assume a tenderness they are far from feeling. No! It is life! life! It is their duty, their vocation, to save life, no matter how mutilated and miserable it shall be. And they have failed.

LII

Waste in Nature.

Let us ask Mother Nature, for unconsciously it is her peremptory behests they are obeying. They won't admit it. They will mutter science! science! but they don't know that Nature is the mother and preceptress of science. What shall we ask her? Oh, yes! How is it that you, Mother Nature, take such infinite pains for the reproduction and multiplication of vegetable and animal life; and the after conservation of a fungus, a bud, a flower, a fresh-water polype, so that nothing shall touch them, or impair them, or destroy them; and then — fling them broadcast into the dustbins and rubbish-carts of creation? Not only the reproductive instinct, but the maternal or conservative instinct is everywhere. Naturalists stand amazed at the ingenuity with which not only animals, but plants, conserve their offspring, and ward off from that tiny

egg or bud all hostile forces and elements with such solicitude that one would think that that egg and bud are the only remaining specimens of their kind. And yet we know that 100,000 seeds in one solitary plant are doomed to extinction; that 10,000 eggs in one tench, 20,000 in one carp, are flung heedlessly along the waste places of the deep. Life everywhere, even in the ether, and death everywhere dogging the steps of life!

LIII

Nature Silent.

But Nature will not reply, but go on her own way, blind, relentless, undeviating in that eternal circle that is marked out for her, and whose final purpose no man can foretell. "The one, far-off, Divine event" is shrouded in darkness which we cannot pierce until the New Heaven and the New Earth stand revealed, and imperfection rounds to perfection, and mortality clothes itself with immortality, and pain and sin and suffering are no more for ever. But now we only hear the rumbling of the machine, and see the pallid faces, the stricken hearts, child and corpse, cradle and bier; and we almost hear the terrible words of St. Peter to the trembling Sapphira: "Behold the feet of them who have buried thy husband are at the door, and they shall carry thee out." What then? Well, then, as we cannot stop the motions of the heavens, nor lay our hand upon Time to stay him; as we are imperfect, and cannot be otherwise than we are, let us move forward with blind, unquestioning faith, and with the assurance that the All-Holy and Infinite Being has not set us here for the mere purpose of seeing us agonised over an unsolvable enigma.

LIV

A Peep of Spring.

Just as I thought. Spring, like a curious woman as she is, had just forgotten herself, and had come peeping into and trespassing with her lamb-children and flower-children upon the domain of Winter; and the rude fellow, just awakened and alert, has whipped up all his grim apparitors, and ruthlessly and unchivalrously driven off the pretty intruder. Yesterday, Sunday, Boreas came thundering down from the northwest, driving before him in his war-chariot legions of arrowy sleet and snow; and just allowing the frightened and pallid sun to look out on the shrinking primulas and snowdrops for a moment, and then blinding the whole landscape again with his showers of white arrows out of the blackened and threatening sky. It was a horrible contrast to the weather we have had since Christmas, which, however, was unnatural and misplaced. I fear the beautiful Virgin Spring will not show her sweet face again until the "merry month of May."

LV

Boreas defied.

And yet I have seen Boreas and his thundering legions yesterday gloriously defied. Right beyond the river is a splendid field, of many acres, called the Horse Close; and here, during the last twelve months, has been held every Sunday a tournament, or trial of strength, on Gaelic principles and rules, between football and hurling teams from every part of the surrounding country. It is a glorious and exhilarating sight;

and, like the little Irish boy who, when asked by the Inspector, not to define, but to give an example by way of illustration of the word "splendid," promptly answered, "A fight," so, if I am asked to illustrate the words "glorious and inspiring," I promptly reply, "A Gaelic tournament"; for nothing since the old Isthmian and Olympian games has been seen to equal the energy and passion, the skill and science, the temper and self-control, of a modern Irish game. To see these fine young fellows, full of strength and vitality, braving all weathers, and testing every organ, nerve, and muscle in the pursuit of victory, is certainly enough to make an old man young again.

LVI

Athletes.

Yesterday I stood outside the ropes, a shivering but interested spectator. I had two overcoats, a thick muffler, and an umbrella, and yet I trembled with cold; and there, a few yards away, were two or three dozen young fellows, with naked arms, naked heads, naked feet, and clad only in a light silken jersey and drawers. "Every man of these," I thought, "will be down with pneumonia to-morrow." But no! in five minutes after the ball was spun, they were a great deal more comfortable than I. And one team was composed of city men, fresh from shops and counters! I refused to believe it. I inquired. The city team, as I suspected, was indeed composed of city men, but every one had been "raised" in the country, in the green fields and under blue skies. Another argument for those who cry, — oh, with so much truth if they knew it! — "Back to the land! back to the land!"

LVII

A Tournament.

The following Sunday was still, but more intensely cold. There was a heavy rime frost on the trees; the air was filled with a purple transparent fog, through which, as in a stereoscope, the naked branches, each with its pretty rime-coating, stood out in bold relief. It was picturesque and beautiful beyond description, but the cold was too intense to be pleasant. And yet, under that fierce chill in the atmosphere, our young men stripped and fought fiercely for victory, utterly heedless of cold or danger, intent only on warding off the dreaded defeat. And here I saw a curious instance of the silent revolution through which we are unconsciously passing. The teams were apparently very unevenly matched, one team of country lads overtopping in stature and general physique the rather puny town boys who were opposed to them. The latter, however, made up by science what they lacked in physical strength, and very soon the game was on the side of David against Goliath. One of the Philistines hereat lost temper, and was clearly spoiling for a fight. A few times he broke the Draconian rules of the Gaelic Athletic Association, but the referee's back was turned to him and he escaped.

LVIII

Discipline.

Thus emboldened, he committed another flagrant breach of the rules by rudely pushing with his hand one of the opposite team. In an instant the referee's whistle was blown;

the ball was seized, and the whole field drew together. The referee took out his watch.

"Who is captain of this man's team?" he asked, pointing to the delinquent.

"I am," said a young giant, stepping forward with folded arms.

"Remove that man instantly from the field," said the referee.

The captain demurred, and demanded explanations.

"I give you three minutes to decide," quoth referee, watch in hand, and unheeding the demand.

The captain called his team together and consulted.

"We can't play without him," was the decision.

"Then I award the victory to the other team," said referee.

And they put on their coats.

Not another word. It was magnificent.

LIX

A Disappointed Man.

Fifty years ago, forty years ago, twenty years ago, that word would have been the signal for a faction fight that might range over twenty parishes, and be prolonged from generation to generation. That day there was not a word. Another game was instantly in progress; and I saw victors and vanquished leave the field together in terms of perfect amity. I was much amused at the consternation vividly depicted on the face of an old man, who had seen other things; and who had as many marks and cicatrices on forehead and face as a German student. With the instinct of old traditions, he had evidently been expecting a

glorious fight. When he saw how things ended, he was deeply disgusted. He looked for some time into vacancy, as if calling up the ghosts of bygone days, and then sauntered sadly away, muttering:

"By gonnies! What's this misfortunate counthry coming to, at all, at all?"

Section III

LX

I do not know what it is in these iron-gray March days, when the sky hangs low without rain, and the roads are white and hard as steel, and the east wind cuts like a knife, that makes them such mere mnemonics, such memory-haunters, that I always sit still in a kind of pleasing melancholy, and recall them, as they troop up, with a host of other memories, from the past. It is the season of hoops and tops and marbles for boys, nor have I forgotten their blessed associations. But one picture is ever coming up and forcing itself forward on the retina of memory every time I look out and watch the grey face of landscape or street. It is the picture of one such icy-cold, black, raw evening; and the figures in the deserted and wind-swept street are those of an old man, holding in his shivering hand that of a little child; and their voices, the old quavering baritone and the shrill treble, come back to me; and the old waves of pity and sorrow seem to be breaking and murmuring out of the hollow caves of the past.

Associations.

LXI

I see this moment, as I saw with the sympathy of a child fifty years ago, the tall, bent figure of that old man, his long, grey, threadbare coat, through which the March winds were piercing, his pinched and worn features, his long, grey locks hanging down upon his shoulders. And his bony hands held the half-frozen fingers of

Waifs.

the child, as she, too, with her pinched and starved features, strove to elicit a few half-pence from the people before whose shops she was trilling out a melancholy duet about: "Rosalie, the Prairie-Flower." I remember how much I wondered, and saddened at the wonder, why the good folk around did not instantly bring in that hapless pair, and seat them at the hospitable fire, and fill them with good, warm food, and cheer them; and, if they could not keep them for the night, at least send them on their way rejoicing. It seemed so easy, and I felt it would be such a luxury to comfort and greet those poor waifs, that I could not understand the public indifference, or the cold way in which the penny of charity was offered. I understand it better now; or rather, I do not, nor ever shall.

LXII

Spring Idylls.

I found that Spring was in the fields to-day. I traced her virgin form everywhere. I tracked her footsteps in the steaming earth, and where she shook the diamonds of the dew. I searched in all the cool and hollow shades, behind the speckled laurels; and I drew the curtains of the pine and feathered yew to see if she were lurking anywhere. From the next field a skylark soared and sang; and a grey sea-gull who was wintering here beat with his heavy but uncumbered wings his new-found way towards his pathless sea. I saw the green wave glistening in his eyes; and caught the perfume of the sea-brine dropped at every beat of pinion, and every exultant scream. The daisies opened their meek, patient eyes. It gladdened me to see them, though later on, I shall

most likely shear them, as blots upon the beauty of the grass. Rosebuds were shyly unfolding their soft, silky petals — the cradles of the flowers that were waiting the hot sun. Yes! though invisible, the virgin Spring was here; for there was a soft and subtle perfume in the air as of new births and resurrections. And then I heard the bleating of a lamb — not in the meadows by its mother's side, not couched on its daisy, dewy bed; but in a hurdle along the highway, passing to its young death, the executioner walking heedlessly by its side.

LXIII

Seed-Time.

And it was seed-time. Young bees and butterflies, exulting in their new and gorgeous panoplies, were flitting from pistil to stamen, from stamen to pistil weighted with the seeds that were to fructify later on in purple flower or crimson fruit. It was the marriage of Nature — the bringing together of all her secret and mysterious powers, by processes unerring in their uniformity and infallible in their action, as if guided not by mechanical and purely dynamic powers, but by mind and sensibility, the thrill and throb of sentient things through which some spirit of awakening and creation pervaded. One glorious blackbird perched and swinging on the perilous top of the last shoot of a pine sang the epithalamium of Nature; and all beneath, in tree and shrub and garden-bed and grass, was palpitating under the new life, and throbbing with the exultant sense of new powers resuscitated after their apparent wintry death. Let no one think there is no soul nor sensibility in nature. The mysterious power that "sleeps in the mineral,

dreams in the animal, wakens in man" operates too in the veins and capillaries of shrubs and plants. I shall never cut a flower again. I shall fear to see it bleed.

LXIV

Grace and Gentleness.

I notice that pure and gentle things are also very graceful. There is a kind of slowness and symmetry in their every movement, that seems to be drawn on lines of beauty, because, after all, the essence of all perfection of harmony in sound and movement is reserve, and the gentle alone are reserved. There may be a studied grace in the forward or the insolent, or the proud; but it sits there with a certain awkwardness, which is quite clear, notwithstanding all artificial poses and pretences. I hardly know anything more ridiculous than the assumption of good manners by an arrogant and haughty and imperious man. They are so unnatural and uncouth that the creature knows it; and tries to be jocular and interesting. He cannot remain in the golden region where gentleness and affability and charity are quite at home. The character so ill-suits him that he must shake it aside somehow; and he does so by tastelessly drifting into the other extreme, for he feels it is easier to resume his sceptre and toga after masquerading for a moment in the cap and bells. The jesters at the dining-table are the most truculent judges on the bench.

LXV

Here again is the marvellous similarity and kinship between man and nature. There is not in all her wide domain a more savage or merciless creature than the common house-spider or garden-spider. He is the very personification of cunning and brute force. The stories of spiders descending the tubes of chandeliers to hearken to music are amongst the exploded legends of science. And this creature, which has a certain savage splendour by reason of his merciless power, is the most awkward, ungainly, uncouth of insects in his courting and wooing. Nothing can be conceived more ridiculous than the attitudes, the circling dances, the absurd display of charms in the male spider, when he tries to attract the notice of his female bride, if we except the presence of a hanging judge or unscrupulous financier in a ball-room, gyrating to the dreamy waltz-music of Strauss or Waldteufel. The only difference is, that the captious irritability of the female spider often brings the wooing, and the wooer, to an abrupt termination; and history has not yet recorded the assassination of a judge or stockbroker by a butterfly of fashion.

Man and Nature.

LXVI

This accounts for, and explains, what has always been to me a singular and quite unintelligible habit in the life of the philosopher Spinoza. His minute biographer, his Boswell, has told us that sometimes, after long hours of deep and silent thought on the mysteries of crea-

Spinoza.

tion, the philosopher used to find his recreation in setting spiders to fight with each other; and that he used to enjoy the sport so much that tears ran down his cheeks with delight. I always thought there was a certain bathos, a certain disproportion between the pursuits of the great thinker and such puerile sport, and between the profound philosopher and such cruelty. I have a strong suspicion that it was the ludicrous antics of the male spider in presence of his female charmer that amused the philosopher, who, with all his other acquirements, had a pretty deep knowledge of the laws that govern the animal kingdom. And — it is only a rhetorical question — did he see another comparison, an uncouth imitation in these lower forms of life, of the equally absurd gestures and gyrations of that superior being who is hardly less remorseless or truculent than the spider? He had excellent reasons therefor.

LXVII

Poets and Nature.

I find that all poets and philosophers are close observers of Nature through all her wonder-working. They like to be alone with her in her solitude and silence, and to see the mute, marvellous operations that she carries on without haste, without rest, in all her cryptic laboratories. Things that escape the eye of the fickle and foolish, or those too deeply engrossed in themselves, are quite apparent to the poet's eye. He has an eye to admire; and Nature supplies the objects. He is prone to marvel; and she supplies abundant opportunities. True, hers is the Isis-veil which no man can lift but her poet. To him she has no secrets, because she knows he is worthy of her confidence, and in the temple to which she in-

vites him there is no danger of desecration. For reverence and the soul for worship are the first elements of a poetic nature; and the revelations of all the inner arcana, which science is slowly unveiling, and unravelling, and which make the mere scientist an irreverent and sacrilegious penetrator of deep mysteries, excite in the poetic mind wonder and admiration, then comparison, then induction, until he breaks forth into his hymnal of praise and thanksgiving towards that awful Intelligence which is seen in the atom and in the world, in the infusoria of a glass of water and the seraphic beings who stand before the Great White Throne.

LXVIII

I think it is one of the greatest charms in Tennyson's poems — this minute and careful recording of the little things that make up the miracle of nature, and their interrelations with the world around them and the universe. Thousands have seen the tiny dark heads on the ash-tree in Spring, and passed them by unheeded, because so commonplace. They give the poet a simile: Tennyson.

"As black as ashbuds in the month of March."

There is no more usual sight than that of waterfowl standing at certain times of the day on one leg. Nothing could be more ordinary or prosaic. Yet the poet takes the fact and builds it into a symbol. And he has watched how the skylark sweeps down sideways to his nest; and he has seen the resemblance between the hyacinth and the chestnut's milky blossoms. The mighty prophet of old spoke

of the cedars of Lebanon and the hyssop that grows on the wall. Tennyson seizes the idea and builds a philosophy out of it.

LXIX

A Great Lyric.

It is a small thing, and a small poem ; yet I am told the place in the New Forest is shown where the poet paused and wondered and grew inspired; and that visitors go out from London to see it. How many thousands passed by that and similar places, and never dreamed of noticing such a trivial thing. Who is there that has not stood on the seashore, and seen the full-sailed ship sailing by, and heard the boy shouting with his sister, and heard the sailor lad swinging and singing in his boat? But that ordinary landscape was never transfigured into a kind of pathetic sublimity until the poet seized it and wrote that lyric, which will be said and sung in human hearts when London is Tadmor in the wilderness.

LXX

Transformations.

A few days ago I had some little business in the old seaport town where I spent all my childhood's holidays. The place is endeared to me by many memories ; and its every feature is familiarised by frequent, almost annual visits in summer-time. Every cliff, every crevice, every boulder, seems an old acquaintance ; but, as we all experience, the general aspect has changed to eyes almost grown weary from looking out on the strange and mysterious world. I might say that every year marks a new change in the land-

scape. Nature has worked, in her own silent, mysterious manner, vast transformations in sea and shore; and the mind, that has such a creative and formative effect on the landscape, has created its own changes, intensified as the years roll by to eternity. Sights and sounds that thrilled the boy of seven have lost their magic for the man of fifty. The heart leaps no more at the sound of the cataracts on the beach; and the odour of the brine falls dead on senses dulled by the friction of the years. I have become like one of these fisher-boys hauling in their nets out yonder; or like my driver, who takes a utilitarian view of things, and regrets that there should be so much arable land *wasted* beneath that infinite ocean.

LXXI

Age has compensations, I suppose; but nothing can give back "the wild freshness of morning." This day, however, for just a moment, the old enchantment, the thrill of boyhood, came back for a moment.

"The Wild Freshness of Morning."

I had a few minutes to wait for my train when returning, and I strolled along the beach in front of the railway station,— along the firm, white, glistening sands, that are more dear than the marble mosaics of palaces, or the *parqueterie* of the sanctuaries of fashion and folly. There was no one there except myself. Far away along the beach two or three children were building sand-castles; and one old gentleman, probably a retired peace-officer or civil servant, sat quietly on one of the benches far down on the promenade. And there was great silence, broken only by the lisp of the small, creeping waves

that fawned upon the shore. I was walking slowly with head bent down, when suddenly my eye caught one of those tiny shells, which long, long ago we prized so much as decorations for our cardboard boxes, and which from their strong resemblance to a little grain of wheat, we used to call "wheaten shells." I took it up, and in an instant the drop-scene of fifty years rolled up, and I saw down the long vista of time the scenes of childhood, long faded, but not obliterated from memory.

LXXII

Recollections.

The great sand-cliff that terminates the promenade jutted out then far into the ocean. There were ice-houses for the preservation of fish here and there in its sandy crevices. Beneath it, where now the deep sea rolls, was a row of whitewashed cottages. I see them now in the light of the sinking sun, the nets drying on the cliff behind, the black boats dotting the shore and shining resplendent in the evening refulgence, the dead fish here and there on the strand, great troops of summer visitors gaily promenading the beach and shading their eyes from the sinking sun, a group of fisher-maidens gathered around a half-simpleton, — a woman who in her feeble way is trying to imitate for their amusement the deep ding-dong of the great bell at Melleray, and the chanting of the monks. But it is not only the vision, but the very odours of the sea and shore are called up. The strong smell of tarred ropes, the scent of the tangled and half-rotten seaweed, and the strong, pungent odour of valerian, which grew in purple profusion on wall and cliff — all are here. There is the vista

and the vision; but the one thing that made it delectable is not there: the words rise involuntarily to my lips:

> "But oh! for the touch of a vanished hand
> And the sound of a voice that is still!"

LXXIII

The bell rings. Down drops the curtain again. The scene takes on its every-day aspect,—sea, sky, and greyness and desolation. The fifty years are blotted out; and I am a second-class passenger, reading the morning paper in a railway carriage, and far out in the twentieth century. But I have kept that little wheaten shell as a talisman; and sometimes, perhaps, like the kindred "Sesame" of the Arabian Nights, it may open the rich caves of the past and show its treasures, the dearest being that little touch of sentiment which I am not ashamed to avow, and which comes all too seldom into my present life. I know that some people decry sentimentality,—good, pious people,—on the score of religion; fashionable people because it is emotional; and emotion is the one unforgivable sin. The former forget that shortest, but sweetest text in all Holy Writ: *And Jesus wept!* The latter might know that it is this very emotionalism that marks them off from the animal creation, inasmuch as it is neither instinct nor passion, nor sensuous nor base, but only some higher element, consecrated by a memory tenacious of what is tender and reverent, and softened down by that sense of dependence or protection that is the highest bond of social life. Oh, yes! Thank God for our poets; and thanks, O

Sentiment.

shade of Tennyson, for that line, no matter how sad it may be:

> "The tender grace of a day that is dead
> Shall never come back to me."

LXXIV

An Artist first.

Some one, writing many years ago, I think in *MacMillan's Magazine*, declared that Tennyson was an artist before he became a poet. If this be true, he never became a poet, if we are to accept the time-honoured maxim: *Poeta nascitur, non fit.* And such may possibly be the verdict of that posterity that is the most merciless of critics. Certainly Tennyson lacks that spontaneity of idea and expression, that unconscious and unstudied adaptation of words to ideas, that we are accustomed to associate with great poetry. The fact alone that he took years to elaborate a single poem tells forcibly for his rigid sense of artistic perfection, but tells with equal force against inspiration. For if there be one thing more certain than another it is this, that in all great poetry there is inspiration. Whence it comes, or whither it tends, we know not. It cannot be solicited. It cannot be coerced. A writer may strain the *pia mater* of his brain until it cracks, without evolving anything but crudities and commonplaces, that are not worth the ink wherewith they are written. He may study great compositions, and call on all the Muses in turn to assist him, and remain as barren as the sea. And, on the other hand, suddenly and without forethought, without seeking, without forcing, he may be visited by an idea, winged with language so perfect, so beautiful, that it lifts him off his feet with delight and enthusiasm.

LXXV

One can easily imagine such moments in the lives of Shelley and Keats, as the former swung in his boat on the Arno, or lay on the burning roofs of Pisa, and the latter went dreaming in Devonshire lanes down near Torbay, whilst his life essence was consuming away in his dread disease. A few times, too, the vision came to prosaic Wordsworth, as when he wrote that second stanza in his immortal Ode, or the "Lines on Tintern Abbey." And Tennyson, too, had such visitings when he wrote that most perfect lyric, "Break, break, break on thy cold, grey stones, O Sea!" or "Tears, idle tears, I know not what you mean." But most of his verses, especially in "In Memoriam," show marks of the file and chisel, little mortisings of words to suit rhymes, banal ideas wrought into high-sounding phrases, or wrapped in involutions that "conceal, or but half-reveal," to use his own expression, "the soul within."

Winged Thoughts.

LXXVI

Hence, though it is severe, one cannot dissent altogether from that verdict of Taine's on the great elegy:

Taine on Tennyson.

"Cold and monotonous, and too prettily arranged. He goes into mourning, but like a correct gentleman, with brand-new gloves, and wipes away his tears with a cambric handkerchief."

And to one who carefully studies the "In Memoriam," line by line, it is quite easy to perceive

how the poet laid down his mosaic, bit by bit, piece by piece; how he rhymed his lines, and then filled them in; and how the inevitable bathos is quite perceptible, only that it is supported and lifted up by the strength of a preceding or subsequent line. We miss the "lyrical madness," — that is, the spontaneity of Shelley and the earlier English singers, — the bird-like song, that is not fitted between bars, nor subdued by keys, but wells forth in a flood of music under the divine intoxication. But, when all this is said, there remains the universal and inexpugnable verdict that, as a consummate word-painter, or etcher, Tennyson has never had an equal. Some critics, clinging to old traditions, and unwilling to see any imperfection in their idol, put Shakspeare first even here. But that will not do. There is not one Shakspearean lyric comparable for a moment with many in Tennyson, or any in Shelley.

LXXVII

Tennyson's Colouring.

The first impression in Tennyson's art comes from his colouring, — the atmosphere in which all scenes, incidents, and characters move. This is as distinct and peculiar as the well-known pale or golden ochre in which Turner wraps towers, and ships, and palaces, and Roman river, and Dutch quay, and English estuary. It is as characteristic as the central spot of light in every one of Rembrandt's paintings. And if I were asked to concentrate in one word the expression of that colouring, I would use the word "fenny." The Lincolnshire fens, the long levels and the marshes, the poplars and the reeds, the whole grey landscape, bounded by the sand

wastes and the blue deserts of the North Sea, seem to have haunted Tennyson through life, so deep are the impressions of childhood, so long do we bear with us the memory of our early environments. Of course, this became smoothed out into the more civilised features of grassy knolls and downs, and trim English gardens, and all the sweet civilities of places brought nearer to the heart of modern life. But Tennyson's muse always haunts the level plains, where lie the cottage, the manse, the parsonage and the mill, where the stream wanders slowly and heavily through meadows rich in grass and flowers, and where the unheroic, prosaic English folk live out their dull and peaceful and monotonous lives.

LXXVIII

Not Sublime.

But he never leaps to the heights of mountains, nor touches great sublimities. The grander aspects of nature, and the more tragic or lofty ideals of humanity, he cannot reach. And hence, when he unwisely attempted the drama, and when he ascended to prehistoric or legendary ages to find the heroic, he failed utterly. There is a universal consensus of opinion that the period of Tennyson's decadence dates from "The Idylls of the King." It is quite intelligible. He had not dramatic power. He was too impassive, although irritable; too unimpassioned, though imaginative; too fine and artistic for great situations and great bursts of human feeling. He lacked the *abandon*, the total yielding up and effacement of self in painting great situations, or delineating great, passionate character. He was too much of the English gentleman, although he neither dressed nor

spoke in the correct English manner. What could he know of *Enceladus in Etna*, — the fierce tortures of humanity under the volcanic forces of human passion?

LXXIX

Art and Artlessness.

But it is only reasonable to say that the very supremacy of Tennyson as artist and word-painter is all the more remarkable because of the very dulness and prosaic conditions of the subjects that he wrought into such marvellous verse. To take the commonplace, and transfigure it, is surely the triumph as well as the vocation of the artist. And here Tennyson soars infinitely higher than the poet who went back to Nature for his subjects, and whom Tennyson, in the selection and ordering of his places and persons, so closely resembles. For there cannot be a doubt that, in "The Miller's Daughter" and such like pretty idylls, he was following the lead of Wordsworth, and finding in simple themes subjects for great verse. But what a difference between the "art" of Tennyson and the "artlessness," which was not art, of Wordsworth! Both affect a good deal of exactness in description, but here they part.

LXXX

Wordsworth could actually bring himself to write:

Wordsworth's Bathos.

> "But say, what was it? Thought of fear!
> Well may ye tremble when ye hear!
> — A household tub, like one of those
> Which women use to wash their clothes,
> This carried the blind boy."

And:

> "Few months of life he has in store,
> As he to you will tell;
> For still the more he works, the more
> Do his weak ankles swell."

Strange to say, he was not utterly damned for such utter baldness and banality. And, stranger still, he died in the belief that this was poetry!

On the other hand, Tennyson is equally exact, equally minute, equally simple in his descriptions, as in the lines:

> "With blackest moss the flower-pots
> Were thickly crusted, one and all;
> The rusted nails fell from the knots
> That held the pear to the garden wall;
> The broken sheds looked sad and strange,
> Unlifted was the clinking latch;
> Weeded and worn the ancient thatch
> Upon the lonely moated grange.
> All day within the dreamy house
> The doors upon their hinges creaked;
> The bluefly sang in the pane; the mouse
> Behind the mouldering wainscot shrieked,
> Or from the crevice peered about."

Here is the cataloguing of very ordinary prosaic conditions and events, but here, at once you say, is good poetry, as in Wordsworth's lines you say at once, Here is bad prose. Where comes in the difference?

In this, that Tennyson's art is suggestive. He creates an atmosphere, grey, gloomy, and sad; he creates a landscape, lonely, desolate, abandoned; he creates a figure, pining, melancholy, deserted; and he paints in every detail, no matter how minute, to heighten the effect. The rusty nail, the

black flower-pots, the skurrying mice, all throw a colour of uniformity on the picture; and that picture, one of abandonment and desolation.

LXXXI

Word-Painting.

So, too, in the greatest of his lyrics, he makes the sea breaking on "cold, grey stones." The quiet, still aspect of the scene; the fisherman's children playing on the strand; the sailor lad in his solitary boat on the bay; and, finally, the full-bosomed, stately ships, moving silently on through the ocean path to the hidden haven behind the cliff,—picture, framing, and all,—tell the mute story of a vanished life, and the deep, hollow gulf left in the heart of the survivor. In that department of poetry — the casting on the canvas of emotions and feelings, and making dumb Nature speak the thoughts of the one being that is in it but not of it, because he belongs by right to a higher sphere — Tennyson seems to have no rival. Sometimes Milton's influence is supposed to be traced in this word-painting; but I doubt if passages could be quoted from Milton to exemplify the passions that agitate humanity, and show their representations in nature so perfectly, so beautifully, as in Tennyson.

LXXXII

Originality.

How far the genius of Tennyson is original is one of those questions that do not seek an answer nowadays, because it is conceded that there is no such thing as absolute originality amongst poets. Milton plagiarised. Shakspeare not only built his immortal dramas

on existing plays, but borrowed freely characters from Plutarch, and thoughts, ideas, expressions, from Montaigne. And if we note the following very striking coincidences between Tennyson and other poets, it is not with a view of depreciating his worth or lessening his fame. The former is unquestioned; the latter secure, even though the immense popularity he enjoyed during life has sadly diminished since his death. And, besides, it is an axiom that genius has a right to select and adapt, merely adding the splendours of new forms to older phrases and ideas.

LXXXIII

But the following parallels are curious and interesting:

I

Parallels not Plagiarism.

A wind arose among the pines; it shook
The clinging music from their boughs, and then
Low, faint, sweet sounds, like the farewell of ghosts,
Were heard: "Oh, follow, follow, follow me!"
Shelley: Prometheus Unbound,
2d Act, 1st Scene.

But while I meditated
A wind arose, and rushed upon the south,
And shook the songs, the whispers and the shrieks
Of the wild woods together, and a voice
Went with it: "Follow, follow; thou shalt win!"
Tennyson: The Princess, Part I., line 25.

II

I sing, but as the linnet sings
That on the green bough dwelleth.
Goethe: Harper's Song in Wilhelm Meister.

I do but sing, because I must ;
And pipe, but as the linnets sing.

Tennyson : In Memoriam.

III

I had felt some early stirrings of ambition ; but they were the blind gropings of Homer's Cyclops round the walls of his cave.

Robert Burns : Letter to Dr. Moore.

So dark a forethought rolled around his brain
As on a dull day in an ocean cave
The blind wave feeling round his long seahall
In silence.

Tennyson : Merlin and Vivien.

IV

In dreams you pursue the beast, and clamour
Like a dog, who never leaves off the care of toil.

Æschylus : The Furies.

Like a dog he hunts in dreams, and thou art staring at the wall.

Tennyson : Locksley Hall.

V

When forms beloved in visions of the night
With changeful aspect mock our grasp and sweep
On noiseless wings adown the path of sleep.

Æschylus : Agamemnon, 400.

Tears of a widower, when he sees
A late lost form that sleep reveals,
And moves his doubtful arms, and feels
Her place is empty, fall like these.

Tennyson : In Memoriam.

VI

He who for love has undergone
The worst that can befall,
Is happier thousandfold than one
Who never loved at all.

Lord Houghton's Poems.

'Tis better to have loved and lost
Than never to have loved at all.

Tennyson: In Memoriam.

He who has never sought Friendship or Love is a thousand times poorer than he who has lost both.

Jean P. Richter: Titan, Cycle 22.

VII

No greater grief than to remember days
Of joy, when misery is at hand.

Dante.

A sorrow's crown of sorrow
Is remembering happier things.

Tennyson.

LXXXIV

These are trifles — mere adaptations, perhaps unconsciously made. For I do not think that a supreme artist like Tennyson would consciously reproduce the very words of others, as he has done in some of the cases quoted, and still more remarkably in the lines: Adaptations.

"And over those mysterious eyes
The bar of Michael Angelo."

This latter expression is so peculiar that it had become, even in Tennyson's lifetime, a subject for much questioning and commentary. The expression is a Coleridgean one,[1] for Coleridge was not only the greatest intellectual giant that England has seen, since Bacon sank in disgrace, but the greatest word-

[1] "A few, whose eyes were bright, and either piercing or steady, and whose ample foreheads, with the weighty *bar*, ridgelike, above the eyebrows, bespoke observation, followed by meditative thought" (Allegoric Vision).

artist since Shakspeare laid aside his pen, and took to speculations. If there be one pen-portrait more annoying than another in that dark gallery of Carlyle's "Reminiscences," it is the cruel and distorted picture he has given us of Charles Lamb; and his admirable "Life of John Sterling," I mean admirable as a biography, is certainly largely spoiled by that irreverent and fantastic portrait of Coleridge at Highgate.

LXXXV

But to return to Tennyson.

His Mind Progress.

There is no author the progress of whose mind can be so easily followed in his books. It is true that most writers reveal themselves in their writings; but in Tennyson's case, one can follow him, step by step, from the crudities of early compositions to the pessimism of advanced life, and even to that more or less Christian valedictory, "Crossing the Bar." It is quite clear, for example, that he set out in his profession with the sole idea of stringing together musical words without meaning. The influence of Poe with his jingling "Raven" and "Bells" had crossed the Atlantic. "The Raven" was the rage of London drawing-rooms; and its rhythm and despair appear to have affected Tennyson. There is an effeminacy about his early rhymes, even about the names of his Dulcineas, that seems childish in the light of his after-jeremiads. Was he training his ear, and moulding his notes for the full-throated song of after-days? Or was he merely writing nonsense-verses to train his hand and pen?

LXXXVI

The following lines, wisely suppressed amongst his collected works, would appear to suggest this : Juvenilia.

" A dark, Indian maiden,
Warbling in the bloom'd liana,
Stepping lightly flower-laden
By the crimson-eyed anana,
Wantoning in orange-groves,
Bathing in the slumb'rous coves,
In the cocoa-shadowed coves,
Of sunbright Xaraguay,
Who was so happy as Anacaona,
The beauty of Espagnola,
The golden flower of Hayti ?"

The swiftness with which he got away from these gardens of the Hesperides, with their Orianas, and Marianas, and Clara Vere de Veres, into the shock and tumult of modern thought, can only be attributed to those portentous conversations which he held with Carlyle in the tobacco-laden cloudland of that Chelsea garden. Who would have thought that these two young men, hidden there beneath the rude wall of that London backyard, and smoking until the dawn rose red above the roofs of London, could so far pervade and influence all modern thought ?

LXXXVII

How easily I drift into these little monologues on Tennyson and Carlyle ! It is the influence of Spring — Spring, with its tender, silky foliage, its songs of birds, its uplifting of skies, its revelations of the Infinite Drifting.

Azure; all of which remind me of the day beneath the old grey Geraldine keep of Maynooth, when I heard two cassock-clad students discussing these two names, and debating, as they rolled out line after line from "Locksley Hall" whether in the second stanza:

"'T is the place, and all around it; as of old the curlews call,
Dreary gleams around the moorland, flying over Locksley Hall,"

the word "gleams" is a noun, placed in apposition to "curlews," as if the curlews' flight made sombre shadows across the colourless landscape, or whether it was a verb with its nominative "moorland." I only knew that it was the music sank into my soul. It was the happy springtime, and it was youth, which cares little for sense whilst it yields to the fascination of sound.

"Oh, Gioventù!
Oh, Primavêra, gioventù dell' anno!
Oh, Gioventù, primavêra della vita!"

Part IV

SUMMER

Part IV

SUMMER

Section I

I

I cannot help thinking that most of the errors and foibles of humanity arise from the idea, not yet abandoned, that this earth is the centre of the universe, and man the apex of creation. The geocentric theory has never been really banished from the minds of men. Astronomers have disproved it; and, although it has had a resurrection amongst scientists in our day, owing to the advocacy of Professor Wallace and others, all the conclusions of induction on the one hand, and analogy on the other, reduce the theory, not only to the verge of impossibility, but even to the domain of absurdity. The very idea that this awful and ineffable creation was fashioned and formed for man, an ephemeral unit on this planet, is quite unintelligible. And yet, in actual life, it is the delusion under which all men suffer. In religious life, through a species of mock humility, men will speak of themselves as "worms of the earth"; in science, we are told we are but infinitesimal parasites on an infinitesimal atom in space. In reality, we hug the delusion of the poet:

The Geocentric Theory.

"What a piece of work is man! How noble in reason! How infinite in faculty! in form and moving how express and admirable! In action, how like an angel! in apprehension, how like a god! the beauty of the world! the paragon of animals!"

It is only just to Hamlet to add:

"Yet, what to me is this quintessence of dust?"

II

"Ye shall be as Gods!"

For, if men did really believe all that science and reason reveal about their utter nothingness, how could they entertain that terrific pride that might sit well on the brow of one of Milton's fallen archangels, but is only ridiculous and laughable on such an ephemeral being as man? All pomp, all pride, all majesty; all these studied obeisances and ceremonies, which are common to savagery and civilisation; all this artificial elevation of one poor scraggy mote above another; all this enthronement of imbecility and vice, of which you read in every page of history; all this power over his fellow-creatures lodged in the hands of one man, king, magistrate, prætor, consul; all this adulation and worship and fear; nay, all this foolish love and amorous antics, this straining of metaphors to express adoration,—what is it all but the result of a conviction, disproved by science, but for ever revived by vanity, that "Ye shall be as gods!" is the final pause and ultimate issue in that slow, deliberate, but magnificent process, called the evolution of the species towards some hidden but realisable ideal?

III

Clothes-Philosophy.

I remember some years ago, when the tremendous truth that underlies Carlyle's clothes-philosophy burst upon me, through one of those object-lessons that seem necessary from time to time to disenchant us from that morbid condition of delusion in which we spend half our lives. It was at Droitwich, in England, a place famous for its brine-baths, a specific for every kind of gouty and rheumatic disorder. There was an immense swimming-bath, which was much frequented in the afternoon of each day. It was a study to see millionaires, capitalists, statesmen, generals, drive up in their carriages, alight, pause, as if to demand the homage of the world for their splendid equipages, their costly garments, their jewellery, their general majesty; and then, ten minutes later, to see them a sprawling mass of humanity in the swimming-bath, — swollen limbs, cadaverous and ghastly bodies, flinging out their white arms and legs, — a kind of pale-green reptile beneath the thick and brackish brine. Every instant I thought I could hear the Aristophanic chorus:

Brek - ek - ek - ex!
Brek - ek - ek - ex!
Koax - koax!

Except in size, there was nothing to distinguish them from a shoal of frogs in a swamp some torrid night in the early Summer.

IV

Life.

Would not men be a little more humble and pious, a little more tolerant and tolerable, if they understood their utter littleness and insignificance? The whole history of this poor planet from its pleiocene or miocene periods, from its amphibia and saurians, down to the last man and the crack of doom is of no more consequence than the flashing and extinction of a meteor in the sky on a November night. Looking back upon the slender span of an individual life, one needs all the strength and inspiration of faith and reason combined to be convinced that it is aught but a dream, — a kind of phantasmagoria, or illusion, raised by some potent, but malefic magician, to cheat us into the transient joys and sorrows that go to make up the hallucinations of days or years. All is so rapid, so transient, so fleeting; and all the incidents that go to make up the daily delusion are so insignificant, even though they appear almost tragic in sublimity or severity at the time, that the only worthy record of man's history seems compressed into the words of that ancient sage:

"De utero translatus in tumulum."

"Like the lives of leaves are the lives of men," said Homer. And as the lives of men, so is the history of mankind, — the record of a transient and puny race on a planet, which was but an ephemera in space.

V

All this is rigidly if terribly true, yet we must not look too closely at it, if we are to take a rational and profitable view of our human lives. We must accept facts; and try to understand that we cannot make ourselves other than what we are. It is not the problem of other existences, but of our own that we have to solve. And we have to accept our limitations humbly and resignedly in the belief that somehow and somewhere they will disappear; and the broader expanses of another and larger existence will open up grandly before us — the theatre of a greater life. It is unwise to fret and fume because seraphic intelligences are not ours; nor is it ours as yet to stand day and night before the Great White Throne, with no purpose in existence but unending happiness and unending adoration. The fact that we can rise above our low levels, where one hears only the marsh-music of creatures in a state of transition from reptile to angel, and dream of loftier things, is a pledge of their realisation. But we must not hurry on the slow processes of suns; nor wear out in unhappy discontent the years that are given for that great, if tedious evolution.

Not Seraphs.

VI

Neither must we look too closely at our common human nature. Let the artists say what they please about "the human form divine," the draped figure is nobler than the undraped. We need delusions. We dare not examine the realities of life too closely. Imperfect ourselves, we demand perfection; and

Life a Compromise.

reason says it is a bootless task, a fruitless pursuit; that nature is not flawless; and that to examine microscopically what it presents, is to submit ourselves to disillusion. Let us hug our fancies; and clothing all things in the rich habiliments of delusions created by habit, let us throw the rose colours of imagination athwart the lineaments and features revealed all too boldly and sadly under the white light of reason or experience. Life is all compromise; and we must hoodwink the too daring and too honest efforts of the single eye of observation and intellect, lest we should sink discouraged by its revelations.

VII

No Perfection.

In the same way, we must not expect to find the counterpart of our great ideas of moral excellence in daily life. He who seeks perfection in a friend will never find one. He who has found a friend must take him with all his flaws and faults, or lose him for ever. And day by day, and every day, he must throw the cloak of toleration and forgiveness over many things which, if they are to be pardonable in himself, he must strive to regard as venial in others. All this means the pain of clasping shadows, the torture of undeception, the anguish of finding beneath the fairy domino a death's-head, and beneath the purple and fine linen of a Dives the skeleton that hides everywhere. But life is only tolerable by such illusions. The world's work would come to a standstill, if we meditated too much on death; and we should lose all faith and hope for humanity, if we examined the microcosm too closely. It is difficult to say whether it is all a tragedy or a comedy; but

we had better keep masked under our vizards to the end of the last act. Then only shall the eternal question be decided:

"Fleat Heraclitus, an rideat Democritus?"
"Shall Heraclitus weep, or Democritus laugh?"

VIII

But, away with these gloomy thoughts. I fear I have drifted into them through the climatic influences of dark days, east winds, and showers that have more of Hyperborean fierceness than the promise of gentle fecundity in April. And so sensitive is the exposed plate of the human imagination, I fear, too, that my reading of late has been amongst authors, who, with terrible realism, take a despondent view of this poor humanity of ours struggling onwards towards its goal. It does not answer well for Democritus to sit in his garden, book on knee, and with the sad remnants of dissected beasts all around him. It is not well to anatomise too much. If the results are exact and scientific, the auguries are unfavourable. And it is an ill day for any thinker, when he rises up from a contemplation of his species, and exclaims, as Carlyle did, when his attention was called to the glories of the celestial hemisphere: "Eh, gentlemen, 't is a sad sight!"

Climatic Influences.

IX

But let us take Wordsworth's invitation:

"Up! up! my friend, and clear your looks;
Why all this toil and trouble?
Up! up! my friend, and quit your books,
Or surely you 'll grow double!"

Sunny Thoughts.

and go out into the sunny, warm air, and look at all the varied beautiful things mother Nature spreads out before us for our delectation, and listen to the woodland music poured around us from copse and thicket, wood and tree; and let it sink into our hearts, and bring sweetness and beauty there, and a sense of the greatness instead of the insignificance of things.

> "Sweet is the love which Nature brings;
> Our meddling intellect
> Mis-shapes the beauteous forms of things,
> We murder to dissect."

You see, then, it is the intellect, the meddling intellect, the all-comprehensive intellect, the insatiable intellect, ever seeking the reasons of things, ever probing into the arcana of nature, so that no nook or corner of the universe shall be unprofaned; and yet the intellect, that Nature is ever mocking by her subtleties, as children mock the blinded man in Blind Man's Buff, — it is this intellect that stifles emotion, and becomes the unhappy cause of half our infelicities here below.

X

Mother Nature.

Happy is the man who takes Nature as he finds her; who is content with the green fields, with their tapestries of flowers, without searching, at the cost of so much beauty, the records of the ages in the stone monuments beneath; who sees suns setting behind the purple seas, and watches the gleam of a departing ship, without a knowledge of astronomy or navigation; who cannot call the flowers by their hard names, nor muster transfixed butterflies beneath the glasses

in his specimen boxes; but who knows that the shy violet smells sweetly, and that the airy, painted papilio is a pretty, flashing radiance amongst his garden-beds; and who is content to dwell on the flower faces of little children, and the godlike lineaments of the immortals of his race, without seeing the deformities of the multitude, or scrutinising too closely the flaws and spots which, after all, only mark the chequered history of a fallen and imperfect race.

XI

Colossi.

And here suddenly there rise up before me two lofty figures, which alone, by reason of their grandeur and sublimity, would redeem a race more deeply fallen than ours, — Michael Angelo and Dante. They are the Moses and Aaron of the pilgrimage of humanity through the desert, — the Calpe and Abila, twin pillars, marking the narrow boundaries of this inland sea of existence, and pointing to the vast ocean of eternity beyond. The greatness of their work is lost in the sublimity of their characters. Neither of them was quite satisfied with the results of his labours. Their ideals were too great. They sought after Infinite Beauty, like their great compeer in philosophy, St. Augustine, and found it not in earthly things, for neither Vittoria Colonna nor Beatrice, the objects of their respectful admiration, was able to satisfy their exorbitant demands. And hence neither Michael Angelo nor Dante has touched the ideal of perfect beauty in his works. They fell short of the greatness of their design; and instead of perfect beauty, they only achieved majesty.

XII

Their Majesty.

For "majesty" is the only word that can characterise their genius. Those mighty figures that are flung pell-mell on the ceilings and walls of the Sistine Chapel, that Moses, more sublime than the Jupiter of the Greek, that lofty dome, which is but the inner and concentric circle of the infinite; and, on the other hand, those terrible creations of the Florentine, vast, naked, uncouth, like damned and dethroned Titans, and even the celestial beings he has evoked from the rich treasury of imagination, — what are all these but the effort to bring down to human forms and experience some dreams of infinite beauty and loveliness? And when the effort fails, and pen and chisel refuse to bring forth in actual form of poem or sculpture the phantom that is ever haunting and ever eluding the human mind, there only remains the broken and distorted presentment of the impossible, — the majestic torso of a figure the full proportions of which can only be found in eternity.

XIII

Painting and Song.

And yet the soul of Michael Angelo is not in his paintings and sculptures; but in his *poems*, what he failed to place with pencil and chisel, he hath wrought well with the more humble pen. And, as a revelation of those secret thoughts that fill all minds, but burn in the mind of genius, these lines culled at random, are indicative of much:

"The beauty thou discernest, all is hers;
But grows in radiance as it soars on high,
Through mortal eyes unto the soul above.
'T is there transfigured; for *the soul confers*
On what she holds her own divinity:
And this transfigured beauty wins thy love."

And Death was to be the Great Revealer:

"Because in thee I love, O my loved lord,
What thou best lovest, be not therefore stern:
Souls burn for souls, spirits to spirits cry.
I seek the splendour in thy fair face stored.
Yet living man that beauty scarce can learn,
And he who fain would find it, first must die."

Painting and sculpture are but for time:

"Painting nor sculpture now can lull to rest
My soul that turns to His great love on high,
Whose arms to clasp us on the cross were spread."

But song is the art of eternity:

"The fetters of my tongue do thou unbind,
That I may have the power to sing of Thee
And sound Thy praises everlastingly."

XIV

Yes! These two beautiful characters stand out amid the caitiff rout of their contemporaries, colossi, girt with the majestic and massive strength of genius and virtue combined, their high hands holding aloft the flaming torches of truth to light the dark and devious paths along which poor humanity is still struggling. And History, which with unerring finger, whether of disdain or justice, has blotted out from her pages

Great Sayings.

the names of the mere rabble of dukes and counts, Guelphs and Ghibellines, podestás and magistrates, kings and priors, has protected and enshrined in her pages these two names amongst the things she will never suffer to pass into oblivion. And she has kept also alive one or two of those great sayings which, more than great works, are indicative of character. That "nunquam revertar" of Dante, written in response to a base proposal from his fellow countrymen, who were anxious to redeem their baseness without compromising their dignity; and that reply of Michael Angelo to Julius II. in similar language: "I shall not return to Rome, for if I were undeserving of your esteem yesterday, I shall not be worthy of it to-morrow," mark the indomitable spirit, that yet can be childlike in its humility.

XV

Their Tenderness.

Strangest of all is the depth of tenderness that shows itself in these two souls, which on a merely superficial glance seemed clothed with the pride of genius, and the haughtiness of unstained manhood. If we have any very definite idea of Dante, it is that of a proud, haughty, disdainful soul, wrapped up in the melancholy of gloomy thoughts, and carrying in gait and face and figure the outward symptoms of a spirit darkened and embittered by the tragical events of his life. We know that when he passed along the streets of Ravenna, the people pointed him out: "*Eccovi l'uomo ch' è stato in inferno*"; and how his speech was short and swift and brusque, especially towards the great ones of the earth. We also know that Michael Angelo flung aside with magnificent con-

tempt offers of money or honours, which he could not accept without dishonour to his conscience, or disloyalty to his art. He, too, gives us the impression of aloofness and solitude from his kind — of a great spirit engrossed with great thoughts, and utterly oblivious of these petty things which seem to occupy half the waking hours of ordinary men.

XVI

But if these great spirits were dowered with "the scorn of scorn, the hate of hate," they also were possessed with the larger poetic dower of "the love of love." It is easy to misunderstand both, just as such souls are generally misinterpreted by their kind; and by the shallow critics who measure their manifoldness by their own barren simplicities. It is quite true, as Foscolo says, "that the power of *despising*, which many boast, which few really possess, and with which Dante was uncommonly gifted by nature, afforded him the highest delight of which a lofty mind is susceptible." But it seems to me more true to say that this disdain was rather a panoply, a coat of arms against the "slings and arrows of outrageous fortune," than the real, inner soul of the man. To see Dante aright, one must turn away from that haughty and terrible face and watch him, the humble disciple of Virgil, as with timid steps, and in deep humility, he followed his master through the narrowing circles of hell; and dropped down in faints of terror, or shed bitter tears, as Francesca swept by him, and in one pause of pleasure in her endless misery told her sad tale; or the wail of the sepulchral souls came borne to his ears, and he saw the terrible lids closing down

And Infinite Pity.

for ever under the sentences of the final judgment. And Dante, to be better known, must be followed into the higher regions of Purgatory and Paradise, if we are to know the depths of humility and the strength of divine love that animated the tried spirit, and contrasted with the gloom and severity of his exterior.

XVII

Michael Angelo's Generosity.

And then, the superb generosity of Michael Angelo! He lavished his praises (and who can measure the value of such praises from such a mouth?) on all his contemporaries. Massacio's pictures, he thinks, when first painted, must have been alive. The gates of the Baptistery at Florence, the work of Andrea de Pisa, are fit to hang at the entrance of heaven. Bramanti, who laid the first stone in the great basilica of St. Peter, was a clear, luminous mind, fit to design the greatest structure. He waves his hand towards the dome of the Cathedral at Florence, as he departs for Rome, and apostrophises its builder, Brunelleschi: "Like you I will not build; better than you I cannot." He will accept no gift from any man. He sends back to the Pope the hundred crowns that were proffered as one month's wages at St. Peter's. This must be a work of love, or not be effected at all. He is importuned to come back to Florence, and leave his great work unfinished. He answers: "No! to leave St. Peter's unfinished would be a great sin." He is hated. He speaks of "the cormorants who daily hope to get rid of me." He fronts death with the calm serenity of divine faith. "If life pleases us, death, being the work of the same Master, ought

not to displease us." His soul can no longer be appeased by his passionate work of ninety years. He wants nothing now but love, — Eternal Love!

XVIII

Platonic Love.

And then, the marvellous sweetness and purity of these men! Although both of them wrote enthusiastically, almost passionately, of love, it is quite easy to perceive that it was not the love that flames along the lines of carnal poets or dramatists. The beauty Michael Angelo worshipped was purely intellectual. It was his conception, — his mind-creation of whatever was good and holy and pure in the universe of things. It was ideal beauty, the perfection which all lofty spirits seem to make it their life business to seek, and which haunts them with its ever-present, but ever elusive and evanescent suggestions of a Supreme Excellence that exists, but will not reveal itself to the hungering human mind. That all his ideas were ranged along the highest pinnacles of sublimity we can conjecture from his poems as well as his plastic works. That his was an unstained nature Condivi, his friend, testifies:

"I have often heard Michael Angelo reason and discourse on love, but never heard him speak otherwise than upon Platonic love. As for me, I am ignorant what Plato has said upon this subject; but this I know very well, — that, in a long intimacy, I never heard from his mouth a single word that was not perfectly decorous, and having for its object to extinguish in youth every improper desire, and that his own nature is a stranger to depravity."

XIX

Beatrice.

On the other hand, I wonder if there is in all literature anything so beautiful as Dante's ideal and spiritual love for Beatrice. It seems almost capable of redeeming and sweetening all that humanity has suffered from sensuous poetry. It is so ethereal, so taintless, so fleshless, so reverential, so tender, so awesome, that I think the womanhood of the whole world should deem itself glorified and sublimated by such a conception. Except alone the tribute of the same poet to our Blessed Lady, or the many tributes paid by his glorious countrymen by pen and pencil to the highest form of womanhood, it is the noblest personification of ideal beauty that has ever been made by human pen. When one sees in imagination this glorious vision leading the poet upwards along the steep heights that lead to the summits of Heaven it gives a little shock to remember that Beatrice was married, and probably unhappily. But then we know that it is the child of fifteen, the gentle vision that confronted him that memorable day on the bridge that spanned the Arno, that he has placed for ever as the brightest spirit in the ranks of those who have been canonised by poetic adoration.

XX

Other Heroines.

For, after all, what are your Lauras, your Imogens, your Portias, your Cordelias, to this gentle lady? Of the earth, earthy, they are not fit to raise the hem of her garment. Shakspeare, gross and carnal, amid a mob of carnal surroundings, could no more create a Beatrice than

he could paint a Crucifixion. Milton could never rise beyond the human attractions of an Eve. Goethe, fallen himself, could never dream but of the fallen. Tennyson alone in Arthur, and the "lily maid of Astolat" seems to have some conception that purity is the celestial privilege that elevates woman and ennobles man. But Tennyson could never reach the sublimity and glory of a heavenly Beatrice; nor move an inch above the conception of purely human perfection embodied in a beautiful form, and endowed with the grace of infantile innocence and inexperience. Beatrice alone is the Spirit made perfect, the Being that evokes the adoration of man for the Highest.

"Ch' amar dee l'opra chi 'l suo Fabro adora."

XXI

Decadent Italy.

How fearfully the Italy of their love, the soul of their inspirations, has degenerated, is obvious to the most unprejudiced observer. The mercantile spirit, the spirit of England and America, the worship of *Dea Moneta*, has crept into the land of sunshine and beauty; and to the horror of every lover of art and the picturesque, that fairest of fair lands is threatened with the fate of England. Ancient palaces whose walls have taken on the colour of ivory from a thousand suns, are being pulled down to make way for a wretched stucco modern mansion, cheap and nasty; factory chimneys of hideous red brick, vomiting their fumes of smoke and soot, defile the vineyard and the olive-grove; historic rivers are bridged by frail, cheap structures, as untrustworthy as that in Rome, which Michael Angelo found trembling beneath his

horse's hoof; and in Rome, Imperial Rome, ancient and venerable churches are being removed, with their glorious historical associations, to make way for Hausmann streets, where houses half built, and then suspended for lack of funds, stare down on a population that seems not to know, or feel, that its indifference to such sacrileges is the surest sign of its own decadence.

XXII

Her Modern Poets.

And there are no artists in Rome to-day, except a few German or American students who come from afar to study the masterpieces of a Past that shall never know a *Renaissance*. Workmen in the Carrara quarries no longer chisel blocks for a Michael Angelo or a Canova; but turn out cheap statues to fill the churches in England or the United States. A few wretched women make a livelihood as models for German or English students in the cities where, in their golden age, mighty masters knew no models but angels and saints; and Dante and Petrarch and Michael Angelo — the Divine Poets of the Past, have for their successors a few hymnists of the Revolution, whose names shall never cross the Alps, or be heard beyond the village journal, in whose corners they are writing.

XXIII

Carducci.

Lo! as I write these words, a solitary line in a corner of a newspaper announces:

Carducci is dead!

Am I therefore wrong? Carducci has crossed the

Alps. True! And also true that just a few weeks ago, he was crowned poet by a few admirers from France and Italy. But oh! what a mighty gulf separates this revolutionary singer of the nineteenth century from the Dante and Michael Angelo and Petrarch of the past. No city shall fight for his remains and claim him as a child. No deputations to popes will plead for his dead ashes. No thousand translations of his poems shall be made into every language on the globe. And what a paltry and meagre ceremony this of yesterday compared to the crowning and laurelling of Petrarch by the Roman Senate in presence of fifty thousand jubilant and enthusiastic Romans.

XXIV

This age of iron and steel is not a great age. It shows no great men. There is everywhere a famine of intellect. A crowd of mediocrities fill the places occupied by the giant geniuses of the past. And they have one and all this characteristic,— they are filled with the spirit of revolt. Goethe seemed to have anticipated the wild delirium which was to seize on all the pretentious beings who came after him, when he put into the mouth of Satan, in answer to the interrogatories of the student, "*I am the Spirit who denies.*" Denial, revolt, the supersession of all existing forms of government or religion, to make way for schemes as visionary and undefined as *Utopias* and *New Atlantides* always are,— this is the *Zeitgeist*, the spirit of the age. And with it arises a concomitant spirit, — a new-born enthusiasm for the past, especially the pagan past of the world,— the time when the arts were omnipotent, and the senses governed all things;

A Degenerate Age.

when there was no law, no restraint, but the *summum bonum* was the creation and enjoyment of fair and beautiful things, without reference to higher calls and nobler duties for the well-being of humanity.

XXV

Goethe, Coryphæus.

I have hardly a doubt that the great pagan, Goethe, whom Matthew Arnold, artist and agnostic, hails as the greatest voice of the nineteenth century, was the first apostle and chief coryphæus in this revolt against Christian civilisation,—this return to the reign of sense and paganism. He had his counterparts of course in the mediæval renaissance; but his was the nineteenth-century voice that awoke new and morbid and furious dreams in the newly emancipated intellect of Europe. For whereas the teachings of Voltaire were absolute negations, and those of Rousseau preached a return to nature, the more subtle and more dangerous dogma of Goethe was the need of return to ancient paganism,—to the gods and goddesses who haunted the groves of Dodona and the banks of Ilyssus, and whose hot lusts and wantonness were extinguished in the streams of blood that flowed from the veins of martyrs for the cause of the pure and gentle Christ on the sands of the *Coliseum*.

XXVI

A Portentous Renascence.

Rousseau and Voltaire precipitated the Revolution. Goethe has had a slower but more opulent success in the Neo-paganism of our age. This strange and portentous renascence, which has not left even Ireland quite untouched, has had its scientists, its

lawgivers, its priests. The latest and most daring of its poets is the man Carducci, the author of that "Hymn to Satan" which startled and shocked even the most advanced of the anti-religious propagandists of modern Europe. There is some latent sense of decency in the English and German mind, that, notwithstanding its antagonism to Christianity, stops short at blasphemy and persecution. Thus the most advanced of the German transcendentalists never allowed himself the terrible looseness and audacity of speech which has always characterised the French schools of philosophy. And English thinkers will never pass the lines beyond which there is always the danger, if not of outraging the Supreme Intelligence, at least of shocking the nerves of cultured and refined compatriots.

XXVII

French and Italian atheists know no such restraints. With them it is a point of honour to outrage religion, and flout the Almighty. Whether their countrymen are insensible to such awful intellectual perversion, such satanic defiance of all that is most high and holy, we know not. This we know, that no poem in modern times has equalled the blasphemous audacity of "The Hymn to Satan"; and yet it is Carducci's first claim to distinction as an Italian poet. It is the hymn of the orgies of human nature let loose with all its terrific possibilities of untamed and unrestrained licentiousness. It is the voice of the whirlwind and of the conflagration, scouring and sweeping the earth, to make way for the empire of Satan. And the two ideas are blended

Hymn to Satan.

in fatal unison,— the emancipation of the flesh and the Spirit. Venus

Tra le odorifere Palme d'Idume. Dove biancheggiano Le Ciprie Spume.	Venus amongst the sweet-scented palms of Idumæa, where the foam of the Cyprian wave is blanched.

and then Martin Luther!

Gitta la tonaca Martin Lutero, Gitta a tuoi vincoli Uman pensiero.	Cast aside thy habit, Martin Luther! Cast aside thy bonds, O human reason!

and then:

Salute, O Satana! O Rebellione! O fozza vindice Della ragione.	All hail, O Satan! O rebellion! O avenging power of human reason!

XXVIII

Lawlessness.

The idea has by no means the merit of originality. It is as old as the world, and has seized on the minds of men under different forms and figures. But it has certainly reached its fullest development in the writings of the last century. The cardinal principle in the philosophic works of the arch-rebel, William Godwin, was that "law is an institution of the most pernicious tendency;" and that in religion and law is to be found "a dark power of imposture which fights and has hitherto fought with singular success against the power of truth. Kings and priests represent the incarnation of evil." Humanity is the chained "Prometheus," and Law is the Jove, the tyrant, the avenger, who keeps the far-seer and far-seeker in chains. Thoroughly sympathetic,

Shelley can scarcely be said to have adopted this idea, which was already his own by reflection and prejudice. He has embodied all that the revolutionary spirit has preached and promulgated in his "Revolt of Islam"; and in his sad life he flung down the gauntlet at the feet of public opinion and suffered, as all men must suffer, who contend against what is inexorable as Fate.

XXIX

But the strange thing is that it was the scientific spirit, of which Goethe was more enamoured than of poetry, which, in the very middle of the century shattered for ever this idea of universal passion and indiscriminate love by proving, through the discoveries of Charles Darwin, that it is not Love but Law that rules the universe. It came as a terrific shock to all those hapless minds who were hugging the belief that the great motive power of the world was the instinct, which man has in common with the beast, to satisfy unbridled passion and sanctify the infringement of social customs by an appeal to the suffrages of the emancipated. A higher class, which had clung to a higher conception of Love, as "being Nature's final law," were no less terrified at being brought face to face with iron necessity. It seemed as if the universe were shackled in a blind despotism that worked darkly and enigmatically, but pursued its unerring way heedless of aught it caused in the way of despair and suffering, and moving slowly but with awful and indifferent regularity towards the consummation of a purpose as hidden as its action was mechanical and blind.

Science and Law.

XXX

And Despair.

There was something pitiful in the way in which the Doubters and the Agnostics (who clung in the darkness to some faint hope that behind the dread mechanism of the universe was some mysterious, impersonal element which, in face of the iron necessity that seemed to encompass the universe, was yet slowly working out the problems of existence towards a millennium of universal and eternal *Love*) were suddenly confronted with the discovery that there was nothing anywhere but *Law*. In the dead mineral, in the half-sentient vegetable, in the highest organism, called man, life or existence, or whatever it may be called, was evolved by one law, conserved by another, abandoned to decay and dissolution by a third; and whilst a certain section of that school professed to accept with a kind of joyful enthusiasm the fact that even Death itself, with all its brood of minor evils, could be accepted with equanimity as part of the inexorable programme, another and more sensitive section seemed to look back with brimming and wistful eyes to the days when they reposed in the full security of a faith that could gladly accept this theory of Law, with the conviction that it came from the hands of the same great Originator whom they called our Father, and Lord of all hope and love.

Section II

XXXI

There are two admirable laws amongst the Jews which might well be adopted by Christian communities. The first is, that no Jewish youth or maiden should be permitted to read the Song of Solomon, the Canticle of Canticles, until the age of thirty, the age of maturity, was reached. Notwithstanding its vast spiritual significance, which was perhaps but dimly guessed by Jewish legislators, there is a certain sensuous sweetness in this piece of exquisite Oriental poetry that might possibly prove to youthful or effeminate minds suggestive of things on which the pure imagination is forbidden by natural instinct to dwell. In the frantic passion for education which characterises our epoch the lesson is one that may be laid to heart. Preceptors and professors who may have passed beyond the age of temptation, and who have grown enthusiastic about favourite authors, are prone to forget that youth has its hot fires of passions only banked up by the restraints of religion or the absence of temptation; and the old and venerable and veritable warning, *Maxima debetur pueris reverentia*, is too apt to be forgotten in the race for culture, and the pride of being able to say, I have read that! Meat for men; milk for babes. There are lines of congruity everywhere that should never be overpassed.

Jewish Laws.

XXXII

Purity before Learning.

I would sacrifice "Hamlet" rather than see the eyes of a young girl resting on those three or four lines of his address to Ophelia; I would burn "Romeo and Juliet" rather than see the first hot blush of wounded innocence mantling the face and neck of some sweet child, whose eyes had rested for the first time on the obscene wit of that thrice detestable nurse. I would not make our youth, no matter how ardent in their passion for self-improvement, mere "pickers-up of pearls from dunghills." The soul is greater than the mind; and its purity is more important than the mere mental cultivation. It is not by intellectual acquirements, but by *character*, we are judged before the tribunals of men, as well as that of conscience. The life is more than the work, as the body is more than the raiment. It is moral excellence, after all, that constitutes the charm of humanity; and the sweet and holy innocence of girlhood is of far more importance than the wit of gilded salons, or the achievements of a George Sand or a De Staël.

XXXIII

An Index.

I would have an *Index Expurgatorius* for youths and maidens under thirty; and I would promptly place upon it such names as Boccaccio, Montaigne, Rabelais, Shakspeare, etc. Whatever contempt modern sciolists may lavish on "Family" or "Bowdlerised" Shakspeares, there can be no question that in their complete and naked materialism, Shakspeare's works are unfit for the young;

and there can be no greater proof of human insincerity, and human inconsistency and human hypocrisy, than to see such lavish and wholesale condemnation poured out upon such writers as Flaubert and Zola, and d'Annunzio, and Maupassant, whilst Chaucer and Spenser and Shakspeare amongst ourselves, and the above-named authors in foreign literature are numbered amongst the classics; and catalogued amongst the Hundred Best Books which have passed down as the noble heritage of dead workers to posterity.

XXXIV

Present Poetry.

If we want to keep the minds of the young on those high altitudes of thought where the air they breathe is pure, and free from noxious vapours, let us put into their hands Dante and Michael Angelo, Milton and Wordsworth, Tennyson and Matthew Arnold; and the large host of junior and contemporary writers who might have achieved immortality if they had been lucky enough to be born under an earlier star. For that, too, is a singular feature of our age — namely, our contempt, or perhaps our ignorance, of much poetry and prose of the present day, which, if written a hundred years ago, would have ranked the writers amongst the immortals. The literary market is overstocked; and valuable assets are held cheaply. We have such abundant treasures from the past that we flout the shy advances of those who proffer their literary wares. And yet a wise reader, who might be possessed of taste, might do well to form a private anthology of many poems, now hidden away in the ephemeral pages of magazines; but

which, if I mistake not, would be crowned, if we had the advantage of an Academy of Letters in English-speaking lands.

XXXV

The Second Law.

The second admirable provision of Jewish law was, if we are to believe the Talmud and tradition, that which made the acquisition of some manual trade compulsory on Hebrew youth. The thought flashed on me to-day, as I watched with interest the steady, rhythmic, unintermittent way in which an ordinary day-labourer, whom I had employed for the moment, worked in my garden. I cannot guarantee that his work was so regular in my absence; but as I watched him I could not help admiring the smooth, powerful manner in which his whole frame worked with spade or hoe. It was just like the beautiful perfection of some powerful machine, when the steam has been let on, and crank and piston and lever silently obey and move, as if in a kind of blind intelligence, towards the accomplishment of some object, of which they know absolutely nothing. He was by no means a powerful man, had even the repute of being delicate. But there seemed to be no weariness or pain in his work. I took up the heavy shovel, but in ten minutes had to put it down again. At six o'clock he ceased work, and I asked him: "Are you fatigued?" "Oh, dear, no!" he said. He had worked eight hours with slight intermission. "Thou art my superior and master there!" I thought.

XXXVI

His nerves and muscles, trained almost from childhood, had the consistency and hardness of iron. Labour was a kind of pleasure to him. He was a child of the universe, where, if you think well, the same smooth, silent, unceasing work is going on, day and night, since the dawn of Creation. I never cease wondering at it — the quiet, silent, never-hasting, never-ceasing work of the universe. No noise, no tumult, no dumb ostentation, or articulate boasting; but eternal silence, and eternal labour, the whole, vast, intricate machinery revolving, creating, renewing dissipated forces, and again entangling them in some web or woof of perfect and flawless workmanship. Oh! how sublime it all is, had we eyes to see it — had we eyes to observe that from the bursting of a bud, or the snipping of a shell up to sun-spots and star-clusters, there is motion everywhere, everywhere mute but eloquent obedience to some unseen Voice that commands, some unseen Hand that directs and controls unerringly; and just as unerringly is obeyed by the vast and complex energies that lie hid beneath the outer vesture and embroideries of nature.

Ceaseless Work.

XXXVII

Sometimes, in the warm summer evenings, when I see harvest labourers, or road and quarry workers, returning from the day's toil, encrusted with dust, and with moist foreheads; and when I speak to them, and notice the hard lines labour has chiselled

Harvest Labourers.

on their features, and how the odour of honest sweat and the minute particles of wood or stone or corn exhales from their garments, my heart goes out in great pity to them, and in a certain mute, modified contempt for myself. And when I see the labourer sitting over the embers of his fire in his little cabin, silent as all these men are, and think, "To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow there is nought for that man but early rising, hard work, poor fare, and limited wages," I feel a kind of natural insurgence rising up within me at such a state of economics, until further reflection suggests that this man, too, is living in strict consonance with Nature, obeying its laws, pursuing the same course, travailing with the same silent persistence, and reaping the same reward. What? The feeling that one is obeying the behests of the Supreme Powers, and mutely and humbly helping on the vast work which, with some great ulterior design in the background, forms the present programme and cosmic arrangement of the visible universe.

XXXVIII

Nemesis.

And I notice that Nature, with her rudder and wheel of Nemesis, ever scouring the earth, will punish this man, too, even for enforced idleness. Condemn that man to a week's inaction there by his fireside, and you make a miserable man. It is not only the lack of means that disturbs him, but the sense of uselessness. All things around him are busy. The grass is growing, the flowers budding, the birds are singing, and man and beast go forth to their labour in the morning and return at eve; but he, he alone, is out of touch with Nature. He is a rusty cog, flung aside from

the great oiled mechanism to rot in ignoble idleness by the wayside. It is no fault of his, and yet he is ashamed. He buries himself there in his sepulchre as one dead, and he fears the face of his fellow-man. Condemn him to further idleness and he becomes hebetated and old before his time. Condemn him to perpetual idleness, and he seeks and finds refuge from the ignominy in the grave. Not many years ago I witnessed a strike on the Great Southern and Western Railway. It lasted six weeks. The men went around the streets day by day dressed in their *Sunday clothes*. They always looked shamefaced, and turned away when my eye met theirs. They were not ashamed of the strike. They believed it to be justified. But the Sunday clothes on working-days were Nessus shirts, — garments of shame.

XXXIX

"The Man with the Hoe."

I am not at all sure but that manual training should go hand in hand with, and even precede, mental training. Very often the mind, slower in its development than the body, can afford to wait. And, besides, manual training is mental training, inasmuch as it develops powers of observation, accuracy of thinking, patience in watching details, and the labour of perseverance. But, apart from that, no mental training is a compensation for feeble muscles, weak nerves, myopia, and the host of other evils that are inseparable from purely sedentary lives; and no mental acquirement or intellectual success is compensation for that growing contempt for honest manual labour which is becoming one of the most vicious and unpleasant symptoms of our

advanced civilisation. "Back to the land!" is the cry of all economists of the present day; and "Back to manual work!" may also be the warcry of those who are painfully conscious that our advanced civilisation is more or less that of a race in its decrepitude, and on the downgrade towards extinction. At least, it seems very certain to some minds that it is the "man with the hoe," and not the man with the pen, we need mostly in these times.

XL

Idleness.

Hence I cannot help feeling a certain contempt or loathing when I behold young men, just budding into the twenties, calmly putting the pillows of old age under their elbows, and settling down to a long life of most ignoble inactivity. It is not alone the Sybaritic baseness and selfishness of the thing that repels, but the very horror at the incongruity of studied idleness and uselessness amidst the general activities of Nature. Clearly these are mere parasites of Nature, and the word has an ill signification. It means not only idleness and uselessness, but theft, disregard for others' rights, preying on the industries of others, eating bread that is not righteously earned. It may be a safe life and a secure one, where none of the lower evils are encountered, and there is always a kind of dulcet monotone of undisturbed serenity. But if great trials are avoided, great deeds also remain undone, and, in hugging a miserable sense of security, the possibility of nobleness is utterly lost.

XLI

Every man should have a great ideal in life — some high point in character or action to be aimed at, even though it be never attained. No man is absolute arbiter of his fate, or parceller of his destiny. Will-power counts for much, but only when conscience is laid aside. "If you want to make your way in the world," says a witty French writer, "you must plough through humanity like a cannon-ball, or you must glide through it like a pestilence." Had he his countrymen Napoleon and Voltaire before his mind, when he penned these words? But "making one's way in the world" is not the attainment of the high ideal of which I speak. It is rather a low ideal, the poor ambition of fox or beaver, or their human types in commerce or the professions. It is an animal instinct. It marks a man as belonging to a degenerate type. It is not the symbol or phrase that designates the higher call to the higher issues towards which humanity is bound to tend.

Some Great Ideal.

XLII

Better to have written on our tombs; "Laboravi," or "Passus sum," than "Felicissimus fui." I have seen two faces quite lately on whose foreheads such inscriptions had been already chiselled. One was the face of a gentlewoman, grown old in peace and prosperity, on whom the world had always smiled. Peace had been her portion, and old age was not infirmity, but the crown and consummation of the unbroken felicities that had been her lot in life. One could be

Epitaphs.

thankful, but one could not worship there. The other had been sculptured by life-long sorrow,—perpetual sickness, loss of material resources, falling away of friends, deception where honour had been expected, derision for no fault but for having borne the whips of Fate. It was one of those faces, which externally calm, are ever ready to break their surface serenity by the trembling of a lip or the gathering and falling of a silent tear. One might well worship here. We are in the sanctuary of sorrow.

XLIII

A Fall.

"Nature had intended him for a philosopher. He became an orator." Was it fate, or self-neglect, or a chain of unavoidable circumstances, that brought about the catastrophe? We know not; nor do we know about whom the terrible epigram has been uttered. But whoever the unhappy man was, great was the deordination; and great was his fall. For I cannot conceive a more tremendous contrast than that which exists between the science of philosophy, and the dying art of oratory; or between the student pursuing in the sacred silence of his library or study his investigations into the *arcana* of human and divine things, and the mere talker in Parliament or on platform, trying to cheat the senses of his audience, until they in turn cheat the intellect, wrapping it in a cloud of "words, words, words." What a contrast between Demosthenes and Plato! The former is rapidly fading away from human vision with a "De Corona" folded beneath his spectral toga. And half the scholars of the modern world are still at Plato's feet.

XLIV

A Lost Art.

It is singular, very singular, how the art of the orator is rapidly passing into the limbo of lost arts, like its sister accomplishment of conversation. At the bar to-day, no barrister dare attempt the oratorical flights of an Erskine, or a Brougham, of a Grattan or a Shiel. If he attempted such appeals *ad captandum*, the jury would promptly shut him up, if the stifled laughter of the court had not already suppressed him. In Parliament, no member dare repeat the processes by which great measures were passed in bygone generations. Gladstone and Bright were the last orators of England; and the success of the latter was due to his lucidity and brevity; whilst the verbosity of the former was beginning to be a torture to his friends, whilst it never won for himself a single vote. There is but one place still where the dying art is held in reverence — that is, the platform. The audience are the illiterate and unthinking. Even in the church, oratory is decried. "Instruction" and "illumination" are now the watchwords. Would Lacordaire summon five thousand men to *Notre Dame* to-day?

XLV

Parliament.

Two things fill me with perpetual surprise, — the existence in this practical age of a Parliament, or *talking*-house, and the descent of such thinkers and writers as Mr. Balfour and Mr. Morley from the dignified and sacred retirement of their libraries to the vulgar controversies that rage across the floor of the House

of Commons. It is simply inexplicable how the British public, clamouring for ever new devices for shortening the details of business, and expediting public affairs, should still tolerate such an anachronism as the House of Commons. In an age of telegraphs and telephones, tubular railways and motors, when every man's speech is *Yea! Yea!* and *Nay! Nay!* it is impossible to understand why such an active race can regard with complacency the awful waste of public time, the postponement of public business, the sacrifice of public interests for the sake of those interminable and stupid debates, those dreary and uninteresting speeches, those eternal platitudes, and that comical attitudinising which waste the time and degrade the dignity of the Mother of Parliaments.

XLVI

Business men.

In ordinary life, whenever business has to be transacted, men meet around a green-baized table, their watches in their hands, or their eyes on the clock, and briefly, with the least expenditure of human talk, discuss, debate, and decide the point at issue; then depart to other pursuits. If any long-winded orator were to attempt a speech, they would take up their hats and walk away. And yet, in an assemblage of six hundred and fifty gentlemen, elected to arrange the most complicated machinery in politics and economics the world has ever witnessed, and to legislate for the social and moral welfare of 300,000,000 of people of every clime and race and colour, the most ordinary and petty measure, that would be carried by a vestry in a London suburb in half an hour, becomes

the subject of human oratory that spreads its dreary desolation over hours and days, and broadens out into a mud-flood that fills column after column of the morning papers, but into which no man will dip a finger if he cares to keep himself clean and intact.

XLVII

I remember one evening in the House of Commons in the gallery over the clock, saying to an attendant, whilst an unhappy member was swinging his arms furiously below me, and talking to empty green benches, the speaker gently dozing the while, and a few groups gathered here and there, and talking leisurely around the pillars: In the Gallery.

"Is this the thing that governs and legislates for 300,000,000 of subjects?"

"It thinks it does," was the answer. After a pause he said:

"It is just like a school. There's the master and his ferule. Here are the scholars, and a very unruly lot they are sometimes."

The member was droning away below, and gesticulating furiously at nothing in particular. It was getting on my nerves.

"How long has the Speaker to listen to this kind of thing?" I asked.

"From four o'clock hevery day to dinner-time; from dinner-time to hany hour in the morning the 'Ouse may choose to sit," he replied.

There was a pause. The eternal droning broken by appeals to "Mr. Speaker, Sir," was incessant. One old gentleman, the rim of his hat resting gently on his nose, was looking alternately at the Speaker,

at his watch, and at the member. The others were chatting and laughing. The Speaker was sleeping gently.

"Does that man ever go mad?" I said, pointing to the latter.

"Never, sir," he said. "Probably he would, but he dozes through."

"I shall go mad if I stay much longer," I said. "How long will England tolerate this?"

"Until some men are sent in," he replied, "to whom time is money,— some workers who work by the piece, and not on day wages. They 'll make short work of this thing."

And the eternal drone went on. The attendant became anxious for me. Probably he did not care to be compelled to escort me from the house.

"If I was you, sir," he said, "I think I 'd go over to the 'Ouse of Lords. There may be a sumthink agoin' on there. This is *very* bad."

I took the hint, and went over to the House of Lords.

XLVIII

The House of Lords.

With "bated breath and whispering humbleness" I entered the gilded chamber. The glare of red benches caught my eye; the solemn and dignified silence smote on my senses; and then I became aware of a figure, which could not be called dignified because it was so young and masculine, standing in the aisle and fronting the woolsack, and of a melodious, gentle, musical voice that filled, as with bird-like melody, the entire chamber. I at once feared for myself. I dreaded my conversion. I stood at the dread point when I feared that I should be forced

unwillingly to abandon a cherished conviction, and resign a dear and well-cherished prejudice. I felt my knees tremble at the possibility. I wanted to close my ears, but I could not. I stood spellbound as the clear, musical voice, without haste, without rest, slowly but unhesitatingly went on pouring out sentence after sentence so perfect, so connected, so logical, so forcible, so affable, that I had to steel myself against its fascinations, and prompt the reason to stand up boldly against the betrayal of the senses. I succeeded only by shutting my ears against the siren words, and asking myself their meaning. It was all about the paramount obligation of England, the mighty elephant, to squelch some rat of a border tribe.

XLIX

This was an attempt at disillusion; and yet I could not tear myself away. The contrast between the unhappy member of the popular chamber talking to empty benches, and this polished orator holding spellbound the Lords Paramount of England, was the contrast between the droning of a Scotch bagpipe and some airy fantasie of Bach or Beethoven played by a master. The House knew it, and yielded itself easily to the fascination. There was not a sound to break the breathless silence. All eyes were fixed on the young orator as, with his left hand in his pocket and his right hand drawing airy circles like a skilful hypnotist, he proceeded on his easy but delightful task. I do not think he was concerned much about influencing the opinions of the honourable House, or snatching a vote. He seemed more

Disillusion.

like an artist, who revelled in his work; an athlete, who gloried in his graceful strength. He paused at last, and sat down. I expected an ovation. There was a gentle murmur of applause, something like the fretful murmur of a sick child that tosses in its sleep. The Chancellor climbed down from the woolsack; the mighty Lords rose up. The House adjourned. Had the eloquence paralysed them for future effort? Not at all. They went downstairs to dine.

L

An Unpleasant Trick.

Whilst I was listening, as in a dream, to Lord Rosebery, and fighting against the almost irresistible fascination of his eloquence, an incongruous thought would rush in, and the cynical, if good-natured remark of Jane Welsh Carlyle about De Quincey would suggest itself: "What would not one give to be able to keep him in a bandbox, and take him out *ad libitum* to talk!" I know this comes from reading Heine. That unfortunate fellow is always dropping you from a cloud into a river, from a bank of primroses into a sewer. And it is an unpleasant trick which one is prone to imitate. But it at least utters the verdict of "ineffectuality" against all parliamentary eloquence. The public should at once insist on making the Houses of Commons and Lords places of business and not of idle talk. By all means, give a grant towards establishing a *Forum* down in South Kensington or elsewhere where oratory might yet be practised; or where such speakers as Lord Rosebery or Mr. Morley might have an opportunity of demonstrating the art of eloquence side by side with Raphael's cartoons or

Bayeux tapestries. And resolve the aforesaid Houses into fifty committees for the transaction of public business. Oratory is as much out of place in legislative chambers as cheap oleographs in an attorney's chambers, or an Italian organ-grinder behind the grating of the general post-office.

LI

A Riddle.

The second question is, what in the world brings Lord Rosebery from his library at Dalmeny, or Mr. Balfour from his lodge in Scotland, or John Morley from his beloved Encyclopedists to foregather with such heterogeneous elements under the incandescent gaslights and in the overheated atmosphere of the House of Commons? And further still, we would ask, how can such men leave the society of Plato and Bacon, of Shakspeare and Dante, for the squalid and altogether mean squabbles that go on about paltry economic questions across the floor of the House? And further still, how can such men accept office and sacrifice the serenity as well as usefulness of their lives in dealing with all the chicanery and deception, all the prevarication and lying, all the furious conflicts of interests and opinions arising out of racial prejudices, personal ambitions, social antagonisms, religious mania, and national antipathies that form the mighty maelstrom of modern political life? And further still, how can such men, accustomed to the lofty and spiritual ethics which they must accept with their reading, and which, if not consecrated by religion, are at least sanctioned by philosophy, condescend to assume the methods which custom sanctions as necessary for state-

machinery, and force their consciences into accepting mental reservations, the "suppressio veri" and the "suggestio falsi," which go to make up from time immemorial the equipment of a successful statesman?

LII

Dalmeny Park.

When we think for a moment of Dalmeny Park, with its two thousand five hundred acres, of the noble Tudor mansion, with its suites of lofty apartments, of the superb walks and drives through the almost primitive wilderness, until one comes here upon forest glades which the scythe and the axe have never touched, and again on some grey-turreted castle overhanging the waters of the Forth, and washed on two sides by the tides that sweep up from the North German Ocean; when we reflect that the owner has it in his power to summon thither, where nature is at its loveliest, the choicest intellectual spirits of Great Britain and the world; and when we imagine the daily silent delights of that superb library, or the pleasure of meditation there where the sea laps the rough granite of the tower; and then of the nocturnal revels where neither wine nor other dissipation can blunt the intellect, but all the powers of great and trained minds are brought to bear on the thousand subjects that agitate and interest modern thinkers, it seems incredible that the very genius of the place should desert it for the stuffy benches of Westminster and the more or less degrading occupation of crossing swords with antagonists unworthy of his steel.

LIII

What is it all? Where is the fascination? And where is the reward? It may be the possibility of acquiring honours which governments will not give except for political services. But then, — what can a philosopher care for a piece of ribbon, or an empty title? It cannot be money. I suppose that the distinguished men whose names I have mentioned are above the craving, which though universal, has yet a certain touch of baseness always associated with it. Can it be patriotism — the desire to maintain the splendid supremacy by land and sea, in court and cabinet, of "this England of ours"? A noble ambition, but pursued in a more heroic, because a more ignoble manner than on the battlefield or the sea-plain. But can the patriotism of a Brutus or a Leonidas stand the strain of hustings and platforms, or the hardly less trying ordeals of long summer afternoons, and dreary winter nights in the House of Commons? Or is it, after all, a kind of superfluous energy, that, tired with the monotony of thought, seeks the variety of action, and expends itself in the pleasurable excitement of such intellectual jousts and tournaments as must exist, so long as there are parties to contend with each other, and the glories of office are the prize. Yet, I can often imagine these splendid athletes asking themselves, after some "night of scenes" at Westminster, whether, after all, "the game is worth the candle."

Is it Patriotism?

LIV

Be not too Bold!

I think it is Balzac who said: "Young men have nearly always a pair of compasses with which they measure the future. When their will accords with the audacity of the angle they open, the world is theirs." The writer, like so many who are fond of audacious generalisations, forgot that there are such things as circumstances, environments, surroundings; and that these need to be taken into account in forecasting or calculating success. There is many a poor fellow in Dartmoor and Portland to-day who opened his compasses all too wide, and found the circumference within prison walls. There is a good deal of wisdom in the ancient inscription over the Grecian temple or rather over its porches: "Be bold!" "Be very bold!" "Be not *too* bold!" Your lot in life may be cast amongst cowards; and then the world is a cheese. But it may also be cast amongst strong men; and then the world is a granite quarry. And, besides, a good many young men are prone to open widely the compasses of their future, until they become a straight line on the paper, the points on a level with the ecliptic. Under such circumstances, the circumference cannot be described by any means. It is rather a question whether more careers are ruined by sinking into the grave of cowardice, than by being dashed against the granite wall of circumstances against which they have been precipitated.

LV

Yesterday, I accepted an invitation of long-standing from one of our most distinguished Irish scientists, Mr. Ussher, to visit the mammoth caves of Castlepooke. In the Depths. They are in my parish, not two miles northeast from the town; and, like many other treasure-houses of earth, they remained for centuries and æons unknown and unnoticed, until this gentle saint of science came this way; and unto him the great revelation was made, — that here, in this cave, hitherto regarded merely as a fox-hole, or a place where the weasel or ferret might breed, were countless treasures more valuable than so much gold, or costliest diamond. He was at home when I called, — that is, his faithful and most intelligent servitor heard my voice from the awful depths of the cave; and by candlelight I groped my way along a narrow corridor, on a solitary plank, and stooped not so much in humility, as through reverence for hundreds of stalactites that hung down, hard as steel and sharp as lancets, like the bosses on the shield of a Grecian chief. After much stumbling, and a heedless glance at the chambers called the Cathedral, and the Swallow Hall and the Hyena Hall (where Mr. Ussher has discovered the only relics of that animal hitherto found in Ireland) I found myself in the Elephant Hall, where just now they were making excavations.

LVI

A Mammoth.

Here Mr. Ussher had already dug up the remains of a mighty mammoth; and just then his attendant was digging with a pick-axe through a second layer several inches thick of stalagmite, to search the soft red loam or sand beneath. The place was in Cimmerian darkness, the black, glistening walls dimly revealed by the light of a solitary candle. Great cavities yawned beneath us, from which we were only protected by safely standing on the twelve-inch-wide footpath; great rocks were tumbled all around; the ceiling of the cave rose above us rugged and threatening; vast recesses everywhere, so gloomy and engulphed, you felt every moment as if some great monster of primordial time would heave out of the darkness his colossal bulk, and make a summary end of the pigmies who were disturbing his eternal sleep. I felt as if the Almighty Maker had plunged me into a dream, and taken me back to the time when chaos rested over all things, and darkness slept on the face of the deep.

LVII

Halls of Eblis.

There were sundry other halls to be examined, — Fairy Halls, Earthquake Chambers, etc. But I yearned for the sun and the light; I wanted to get away from these wizards and magicians of the caves, clad in their leathern tunics and soiled by the chemistry of nature. I crept out into the light humbly; and wondered what a passionate thing it must be, this rapture of science, that compels that gentleman, of independent

means, to spend those long, bright summer days, when all Nature is smiling outside, to bury himself with a solitary candle in this tomb of the dead, and rake out of sand and loam fossils that seem to the untutored mind nothing more than mere *débris*, flung aside by the agency of death, and the contempt of Nature. Whilst we were speaking in the little hut outside, where Mr. Ussher keeps and sorts his specimens, his attendant came out of the cave, holding two earth-soiled brown fragments of bone in his hands. The scientist put the fragments together. They mortised neatly into each other; and without further examination he pronounced the bone the tibia of an Arctic bear.

LVIII

And then he exhibited his treasures, — the few that he had not yet sent on to Dublin, — several teeth of reindeer, beautifully serrated, the bones of a tiny animal, never found but in Arctic regions, the lemming; and lastly, the incisor tooth of a polar bear, about two inches long, its ivory as polished and perfect as if it were extracted only yesterday. These were taken from the loam or sand under the *second layer* of stalagmite, which varied in thickness from two inches to six; and above which was an intercalary bed of loam, beneath a thicker layer of stalagmite on the surface. Mr. Ussher talked away in a quiet monotone of Pleistocene periods, of primary, secondary, tertiary, and quarternary epochs; of glacial periods; of certain telluric revolutions, each demanding eleven thousand years to round and perfect. I heard him as in a kind of dream, for I had

Cave Treasures.

gone off into a reverie, and was travelling through centuries, that would have seemed the links in the interminable chain of antiquity, only that Time, too, no matter how hoary and rusty, is but the youngest child of Eternity.

LIX

A Bear's Incisor.

But what a history was writ in that mute piece of polished bone in my hand; and how it shamed the oldest palimpsest, and the still older handwriting of man on Moabite stones — on walls of Nineveh or Babylon. I saw this northern hemisphere covered with ice. Yonder mountains, in whose fertile valleys men now find sweetness and sustenance, are covered far up towards their summits with perpetual snow. In these crevices and hollows are mighty glaciers. Where yonder castle is built is the top of a moraine, pushed out by the advancing foot of a glacier, moving a few inches in a century. All around here is ice, thick, green, glistening ice, over which, in search of food, the mammoth with his hairy hide and huge eight-foot tusks, the bear, the reindeer, and the little marmot are roaming. There is no trace of man. The mighty saurians and iguanodons are down there in the sea. The world is old, very old; and yet in its infancy. For ages are yet to go by, century piled upon century, before the earth shall be fit for its primate, man; and it is only in the dim and far-off and shadowy future the first scenes in the great drama of human existence shall begin.

LX

Hence the historic scenes of Genesis are quite of recent date compared with this incisor; Babylon and Nineveh and the Pyramids are of yesterday. This was buried in deep darkness long centuries before the Milesians set foot in Ireland; before Firbolgs and Danaans fought yonder in the valley of slaughter; before the Druid priests raised their sacrificial knives at the first ray of the rising sun here in the valleys where Ogham stones are yet found, and huge boulders mark the place where a cromlech was erected. Beside its record of countless centuries, how can we compare human history that is measured only by years, and how grotesque seem to be the eras or epochs marked in the minute-hand of human chronologies by the birth and death of kings! "Ever memorable," "historical," "spacious" (a Miltonic word much in use among moderns), — these are the expressions of historians. I suppose similar terms were used of Ptolemaic and other dynasties, — of a Sesostris and a Cyrus.

Prehistoric.

> "'My name is Ozymandias, King of Kings!
> Look on my works, ye mighty, and despair!'
> Nothing besides remains. Round the decay
> Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare
> The lone and level sands stretch far away."

LXI

It was a glorious day as I turned homewards from that black and hideous sepulchre of dead centuries. The larks were springing upward everywnere, filling the blue

Summer Flowers.

air with pulsations of living song. The sun shone fiercely. Summer showed its least attractive aspect in the hedgerows and trees by the wayside covered with fine, white dust; and its most attractive aspect in the abundance of wild-flowers that starred and spangled the hedges all along my way. The beautiful yellow primrose had disappeared, but the purple eyes of the wild violet looked out everywhere from clump and bush. I gathered a curious bouquet of valerian, whose purple flowers threw out a heavy odour as of opiates, indicative, I suppose, of its value as a nerve sedative; of the yellow broom, from whose golden blossoms is extracted sparteine; and of ladies' fingers, as the children call them, which yield that most powerful and least dangerous of anæsthetics, belladonna. Thus Nature, the great mother, scatters the treasures of her vast pharmacopœia all along our path in life, enshrining in beautiful forms the deadliest of her poisons, the most sanative of her remedies, leaving it to the instinct of her children, as she leaves so much else, to select what is useful and reject what is hurtful or dangerous.

LXII

"All shall go!"

And I argued, Are these pretty, ephemeral things, flaunting their splendours for a moment in the sunlight and then meekly dying away, of less import to humanity than these fossils, dug out with so much labour from the *débris* of untold centuries? Is Science but "a blind man's guess," and "History but a nurse's tale?" or, in other words, shall we place the dead past before the living present, and, just out of curiosity, and just to trace the age of our ancient mother back into the night records of a sealed and buried past, shall

we undervalue this sunlight and shadow, and this life of plant and flower and animal? Or shall we sit down here under this hawthorn tree, whose fragrant blossoms are snowing down upon us, and yield ourselves to the melancholy meditation:

> "So careful of the type she seems. But no!
> From scarfèd cliff and quarried stone
> She cries: 'A thousand types are gone!
> I care for nothing. All shall go!'"

LXIII

I took up the piece of stalagmite which Mr. Ussher had kindly given me as a souvenir of my visit to the Tartarean regions of divine Science, and asked a curly-headed youngster, who was playing with cowslip "dodges" with his younger sister, what it was. He instantly conjectured, "A piece of cake." The sister answered, "A piece of bacon." Our intelligent commissioners of education have not brought geology into our primary curriculum as yet. I brought it home, and exhibited it next day to more advanced thinkers, pointing out the eight different layers of granulated and crystallised carbonate of lime. I was then rash enough to state that, to form a layer of carbonate of lime one-twentieth of an inch in thickness from raindrops, percolating through the roof of a cave, would take from two hundred to two hundred and fifty years; and that therefore that piece of stalagmite was in course of formation about seven or eight thousand years! They smiled at me with a patronising air of incredulity. Clearly, science is not going to conquer the world by a magnificent *coup de main.*

Unbelievers.

Section III

LXIV

There was a stampede of small boys to-day, as I approached, during early school-hours, the enclosure where a number of circus-waggons, in all their splendid war-paints, were collected. It was a small, third-rate circus, for the great and mighty ones would not condescend to visit an out-of-the-way village like this. But what does that matter to the small boy? It was a circus, and that was enough. It was a harbinger of Summer for one thing; and old memories, old sensations, old dreams, old fascinations, began to wake up from under the dread realism that comes from an experience of forty years. As the boys who were playing truant scampered off, an old man said to me:

A Stampede.

"Lave 'em alone, yer reverence! You don't know what a circus is to a boy!"

God bless his old child-heart, and his toothless mouth, and his old wrinkled face! Not know what a circus is to a boy? And forthwith up there came from the dark realms of memory pictures and panoramas, and with them such dear old tender sensations and associations I could almost have cried for their pathos and tenderness.

LXV

"Not know what a circus means to a boy?" As if I ever could forget the delight, the rapture, the enthusiasm that filled my heart, when the first flaring posters, three yards in length and two in depth, greeted our eyes on our way to school. How the yellow

A Circus to a Boy!

and red figures and letters, the gorgeous ladies and the immortal clowns, danced before our eyes all day and every day, until the circus came, and blotted out those black and white abominations called books! How we speculated and guessed and argued and fought over the possible incidents that were to make this circus the *einzige*, the *only* one that was worth talking about. How we started from bed at unearthly hours when the first rumble of the monster waggons was heard in the street, and, half dressed, feasted our eyes on the golden sculptures of lions and dragons that bedizened the great waggons as they thundered beneath our windows. How, despising such paltry things as mere breakfasts, we hastened to feast our eyes on the few things we were permitted to behold through the iron gates of the enclosure! With what heavy hearts we went to early school; and how we envied the courage of the truants, who dared the master's anger (and fast and furious was his anger), and "mitched," "slinged," or "slanged" all the forenoon beneath the cars and ropes and masts that lay in glorious confusion all around! With what a whoop of delight we trooped out of school, half killing each other in our eagerness; and watched and watched until, amidst our enthusiastic cheers, the white cone of canvas shot up into the sky, and the red pennant floated proudly across the azure.

LXVI

"Not know what a circus is to a boy?" As if we could ever forget the rapture, the ecstasy of seeing the twenty dappled horses come slowly out from beneath the arch of the old market-house, and the first thunder of the

The Procession.

big drum was heard, and we watched, with a wonder and admiration that never yet was given to a crowned head, the proprietor of the circus aloft in plain clothes, as beseemed his dignity, and holding in his hands the twenty long lassoes or reins of polished leather with which he governed and guided his noble steeds. Talk of Phaeton and his chariot of the sun; of Mazeppa on his thundering steed! They vanished into insignificance before the sublime spectacle of one man guiding twenty restive horses through a cheering and tumultuous crowd! And then the gorgeous bandsmen, and then the dainty carriages, on wheels as high as the Ferris-wheel of Chicago; and the young ladies, so saucy and so *insouciantes*, clothed in gorgeous habits of blue velvet embroidered in silver, or red velvet embroidered in gold; and the men, like knights of old on their palfreys, and the boys (oh! how we envied them) on their little ponies; and last of all, Grimaldi, the immortal clown, his face painted white with red blotches here and there, and his conical cap and his mock terror as he guided the three prettiest little ponies, and seemed to be always in the act of saving himself from falling. How we cheered and yelled and ran ourselves out of breath when the procession, that had set out in so dignified a manner, returned at a gallop, and the whole gorgeous vision vanished like a dream of the night, when the soul, emancipated, wanders like a spirit in the House of Sleep!

LXVII

Fairyland.

"Not know what a circus is to a boy?" God bless your old foolish heart, as if I could ever forget the transports (calmer, I admit, than those with which we watched

the procession, but still transports) when our elders bought our tickets, and we entered triumphant through the canvas avenue that led to elysium! The odour of the flaring naphtha and the pine-dust on the arena is in my nostrils to-day, just as the fairy visions of ladies, or sylphs, or fays leaping through paper hoops and alighting safely on the backs of the galloping horses, and the terror of the pole-climber, and the antics of the clowns, and the cracking of whips fill the long-closed avenues of eyes and ears! Ah me! what a fairyland is childhood! But that, too, is evanescent. Else why did I experience that sinking of the heart, that depression of spirits, when next morning (and the weather, although it was May, seemed to accommodate itself to my moods) I watched the vast cavalcade slowly trooping out from the archway, the two great elephants in front, and saw it disappear around the corner, and listened for the last rumble of the waggons as they proceeded to some far-away and happy place, and wondered why there was not a perpetual circus established everywhere for the delight of small boys and the discomfiture of mercenary schoolmasters?

LXVIII

Childhood.

Yet is it not a most beautiful provision of Nature, that which stretches out so long that they seem interminable those happy days of childhood, and only hurries us on to our final rest when sorrows fall thick as snowflakes, and we are painfully treading our *via dolorosa* towards the grave? Who can ever forget the long, long, sunshiny days in Summer, when he played down in the deep dell or glen by the river that dwarfed itself,

apparently for his accommodation here, and expanded in lustrous shallows there; and the long green flags and water-grasses waved so beautifully and so lazily in the silent current, and the purple and yellow iris shone resplendent, and the dragon-fly, clad in his iridescent coat of mail, poised himself on invisible wings amongst the rushes and swordlike flags; and he watched, with childish proclivities towards destruction, the sticklebacks that hid beneath the primrosed banks and guarded their young, and captured their food in the white caterpillars that tried to bury themselves in the hollow sheaths of decayed branches deep down in the loam and sand of the stream. And our little loves, and our little hatreds; and the songs that come back so sweetly from the haunted chambers of memory. Ah! days of childhood, so long and sweet and sunny and unclouded, save for the dappling of a moment's shower, or the tiny shadow of some cloudlet of sorrow, ye shall not return! No! ye shall not return any more for ever! *Vale, vale, longum vale!*

LXIX

A Rare Talent.

But the old man's observation, besides starting these trains of memory, also suggested a thought, — that really it is a rare virtue, or accomplishment or talent, to be able to enter into the minds of others and see things through their eyes. This is especially true of children. I have met very few, scarcely one, indeed, in a long experience of teachers and preceptors, who had the genius of understanding the child-mind. It is only those who have the power of retrospection, and who can transport themselves in fancy to the days of childhood, it is only those, who can under-

stand the complex and mysterious associations of that realm which they have left for ever. I have found it impossible to convince parents that their children have, by nature and heredity, the very sentiments and passions which animated or tortured themselves in childhood and adolescence. Guided altogether by the senses and the exterior, they are utterly incapable of penetrating the secret recesses of the child-mind; and they seem to have broken, at the outset, the lamp of experience, which, after all, is the very pharos-light of reason, and which would cast its luminous and penetrating rays far down through the intricate galleries of childhood's thoughts and aspirations. And hence the sowing of baneful seeds, and the planting of poisonous habits, right under the eyes of the parents; for we know well how secretive and close are the minds of children, and how, even under the detective eye of love and anxiety, many a dark thought or darker deed may be entertained and practised with impunity.

LXX

The Child, the Enigma.

And so, too, in the matter of intellectual training. For centuries the course of instruction in our great universities has remained practically unchanged. The same *trivium* and *quadrivium* that filled the hours of students in the universities of Paris and Bologna are the *curriculum* to-day in Oxford and Cambridge; and even if modern requirements shall introduce innovations in scientific and technical details, it is still certain that Oxford will ever be the classical, and Cambridge the mathematical centre to all England. But in the matter of primary education, there

is eternal confusion and eternal change. The child is the enigma! From Pestalozzi down to Herbart, and from Herbart to Spencer and Arnold, educationalists have been puzzled by the infantine mind. They cannot get behind its secrets. The intricacies and mazes of the tiny labyrinth are so many and so delicate that the mature mind cannot push its way through. Hence the ever-changing programmes, the substitution of one scheme for another, the adoption of hand-and-eye training to-day, and psychological training to-morrow, and the doubt that seems to haunt the minds of all that somehow they are on the wrong track, and can only retrace their steps when perhaps infinite mischief has been wrought in the minds of the rising generation. All seem to admit that primary education hitherto has been a deplorable failure both in the development of the intellect and the training of the senses.

LXXI

Other Eyes than Ours.

But in the higher life, I often think that the same inability to penetrate into the minds and understand the feelings of others lies at the root of all these racial and religious prejudices that have wrought such havoc to humanity. It is the rarest of rare talents — this of being able to see things through other eyes than ours. If one considers for a moment that each mind has its own idiosyncrasies, and clings to its own infallibility, it is easy to understand the difficulty of reconciling the repellent tendencies and mutual antipathies that must exist between races and religions. Home influences, early education, later reading of one-sided and prejudiced

books, the interchange of common and hostile ideas on one subject — must of necessity create a bulwark of prejudice that it seems impossible to break through or subvert. We all know the totally absurd opinions that are entertained towards churches of different denominations, — towards members of a hostile race, or a hostile political party. In the vast majority of such cases the prejudices are irremovable and ineradicable. No amount of reasoning can convince; no appeal can soften. They have never learned to go outside themselves and see through others' eyes. Man, to be wise, must study the vices and virtues of which human nature is capable, first in himself, and then, in all good faith, in others.

LXXII

Early Prejudices.

I well remember a distinguished convert to the Catholic Church telling me that, when a boy, and even when he had passed into adolescence, he never passed the humble and modest Catholic church in the city where he lived, without flying past it at racing speed. When I asked him what he dreaded, he answered he did n't know! It was nothing specific; but some vague sensation that there was something inside these walls horrible beyond imagination; some occult and dark doings, which were not to be examined or approached, but fled from in terror. It was clearly his early education, — the home and Sunday-school teaching that the Catholic Church stood for something unnameable — that it was the symbol of darkness, the outer shell and simulacrum of everything men shrink from and avoid. Probably that man would have carried these prejudices

to his grave if he had not met with some one who saw through his eyes, made account of all his perverse imaginations, and gradually opened the eyes of his mind to see what horrible and unreal phantasms had been haunting it, and how needful it was to employ the prompt exorcism of reason to expel them for ever. And strange to say, this was but an accident, — the accident of his sister's conversion, and the accident of his proceeding to London in a frenzy of zeal and anger, first to remonstrate with the priest who had received her into the Church, and then to convert that priest from the errors of Catholicism. He met his Ananias, and the scales fell from his eyes.

LXXIII

The Wisdom of Experience.

But if we were to suppose, *per impossibile*, that we could stand by the side of our brothers who differ so widely and radically from us, and with a sympathy born of Christian charity could enter into their passionate prejudices and feelings, and make allowance for all the converging causes that led up to this hardening of the heart, and think what we ourselves might have been had we been born and educated in similar circumstances, how it would widen our horizon of thought, help us to look around things, instead of merely at them, and help us to deal gently with all those unmeaning and irrational ideas that grow so slowly and take such deep and almost ineradicable root in human souls. The thoughts of men on all possible subjects differ as widely as their features; and even where they externally seem to agree, that is, when placed in words or actions, there is still a profound difference. And we must not suppose that

all the wisdom of world is stored up and centred beneath the *dura mater* of our brain. *Qui vit sans folie n'est pas si sage qu'il croit;* and whatever wisdom or knowledge we possess comes mainly through experience, which always teaches the kindred and collateral lesson of our own impotence and folly.

LXXIV

The Insane.

No man can judge of insanity but the insane. There are as many forms of insanity as there are brain-cells; and, if you look over the motor and sensory areas, and try to study the internal construction and ramification of each with its millions of cells, and remember how one diseased cell might easily set up that want of proportion in ideas, or that lack of nerve control which we designate as insanity, it is easy to perceive the value of the opinions of experts. There is no stronger argument against capital punishment than the impossibility of determining who is sane, and who is insane; and there is something pathetic and tragic in the curious tradition that a man's life may be made dependent on the opinion of two experts who, presumably sane themselves, are utterly unqualified to express an opinion on the condition of the insane. The secret working of the brain-cells of a Plato or a Shakspeare is not more of a mystery to a Hottentot, who has just emerged into civilisation than the secret working of the diseased brain is to one who has never had experience in his own mind of that phenomenal, and yet quite common disturbance. Few men pass through life without acting once at least in an insane manner; and if we could read human thoughts as Omniscience does, what a vast and

tumultuous asylum would not this earth appear! "This beautiful madhouse of the earth," said Jean Paul. "Life is a tale, told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing," saith Shakspeare.

LXXV

Delusions.

The senses, the imagination, the words of men, traditions, the habits of life all around us, the stereotyped forms and manners of society, the lies that are fossilised by the ages, the tricks and pranks that mask deception under an appearance of *bonhomie*, and, above all, our own poor selves seem to be engaged in a horrid conspiracy to make our lives one long delusion until our final *consummatum*. To know that happiness is in ourselves, and not in our circumstances; to be able to take the ordinary and accredited beliefs of men and sift them, and examine them, and separate the chaff of folly from the grain of wisdom; to look out with our own eyes upon the world, and to take sidelights on human happenings and events from others' experience, — is a very rare talent. We run amuck with the crowd when the panic of life seizes us. We follow its train of thought, adopt its habits, walk in its ways, although we loathe ourselves for so doing. It is a rare thing to see a strong man step aside and pursue his own course undeterred by human hostile opinion; who has the strength of silent scorn to uphold him, and let the mad world wag on to destruction. "Oh, all you that pass by the way," saith the beggar with the crucifix, whilst the gay and happy pairs of youthful lovers, conning flowers or toying with jewels, pass down the staircases and corridors of life. "Come apart and rest

a little while," was the sweet invitation of the Divine Being, who knew how easily his poor disciples would throng after the ruck and rout of motley crowds to share in their poor, sickly, and dishonest adulation. "Come apart," — into the desert aloof and alone, — the silent stars above your heads, and the Eternal One by your side.

LXXVI

I once knew a man of an imaginative temperament who laboured all his life long under a singular delusion. He was a merchant in a great city; and, like all other merchants, his daily life was the drudgery of living from ten o'clock in the morning to six o'clock in the evening in a damp, dirty office, screened away from a vault filled with vast puncheons of wine and spirits, cobwebbed and grey with the dust of antiquity. The office window, very dirty also, and lined with venerable cobwebs, barely allowed the eye to rest on the blank wall of another warehouse about six feet across a narrow alley. Even in Summer and at noonday the gas flared above his desk; and through the twilight the figures of men — porters, labourers, customers — passed to and fro all day long to exchange opinions and transact business. The daily programme of the poor slave was:

An Example.

Rise at 8 A. M.
Breakfast at 8.45.
Train to city.
Office work from 10 A. M. to 6 P. M.
Train homewards.
Dinner at 7 P. M.
Newspaper.
Bed, 10 P. M.

Sunday was broken up by a morning service and an afternoon that seemed interminable. He took a yearly holiday at some European watering-place, where he was killed from ennui and society.

LXXVII

Chained in a Cellar.

He was a wealthy man, but not a happy man. During his first twenty years, buoyed up and carried on by the stream of youthful hopefulness and ambition, he really exulted in his work, although the frictions of daily life began to wear down his nerves, and the question would persistently arise and refuse an answer: "Whereunto tends all this waste and work?" Then, one day, he took up a volume of essays dealing with the attractions of country life; the folly of treading the daily mill until we dropped into the grave; and the wisdom of saying at some period or other of life, "Soul, sleep now, and take thy rest!" The idea haunted him for weeks and weeks; and the recollection of a certain pretty villa down near the sea, where he had spent a few summer weeks, came up at office-time to disturb his serenity, and compel him to think that he was spending all the most glorious years of his life — a slave chained in a cellar. One day, too, a farming acquaintance of his dropped in, and, looking in a half-frightened way about the lugubrious place, said: "Good heavens, man, surely you don't live here? Why, one hour of these wine-smells and spirit-odours would chloroform me into eternity! Come out, man, and live a human life! Come out, and see our trees and rivers, and hear the winds whistling, and the brooks laughing, and the birds

singing, and breathe the honest air of heaven, and not the mephitic vapours of the tomb." The merchant shook his head, but the lesson went home.

LXXVIII

He now bent eagerly to his task, because he had a definite object before him, — namely, to build up as rapidly as possible a fortune that would help him to get away from the chain-gang and the *forçat*, and spend the evening of his life in tranquil study (for he was a reader) and calm contemplation and enjoyment of nature unto the end. One morning he noticed a grey patch over his left ear; and he thought, I must push on and work harder, if I am to have time for my evening holiday at the end. And all the time that villa above the sea would float in a misty picture, framed in cloud shadows, but richly gilded, above his dusty, ink-stained desk; and every night, as he closed the latter with a snap, he looked around and said: "Only a little longer; a few years more, and farewell, you dusty wine-bins and cobwebbed bottles, for ever and ever!" And then he began to watch the papers for advertisements of sales of seaside villas; and he began to dream, and dream, and ever dream of vast, beautiful oceans, with the white flame of a sail on the horizon, and long, purple twilights that dreamed themselves away into night, and a dusky library crammed with all precious volumes, and peace, peace, and rest, rest, for the long evening of a happy life!

Only a little longer.

LXXIX

"To Let."

At last the wished-for opportunity seemed to arise in accordance with his wishes. He had seen in the late springtime just the thing he had dreamed of so long, — the long white villa facing the ocean, the little lawn in front sloping gently downwards; the sudden, abrupt cliff, the waves crawling or tumbling in hoarse riotousness beneath; and, behind, the deep, dewy fields of a valley, where a brown cow was grazing calmly, and a few sheep dotted the upland beyond, where the trees fringed the horizon and broke up the blue radiance of the sky. If he could have designed into actual existence the place and the circumstances he had so often desired, it could not have been better framed unto his wishes. With beating heart he read the legend "To Let" on the window-pane, and hastened to inquire — and purchase. He was so eager now to get away from the wine-cave and the cellar that he would not hire the place. No! he should become the absolute owner, so that no man could ever disturb his inheritance of such an elysium. It should be his from the zenith to the nadir, — from the centre of the earth to the dome of heaven; and no man should venture on the sacred precincts without license or on trespass. He was surprised, almost shocked, to find how little was asked for it. He closed the bargain at once, and became the happy possessor.

LXXX

Then the ravens began to croak. They predicted that he would tire of the place in a month, in a quarter, at furthest in a year. "Wait," they said, "till November. Wait till the rains come down and the sea is blotted out, and he shall not see from week's end to week's end the face of a human being, except a half-tipsy fisherman or a strait-laced coast-guard. Then he will pine for the electric light and tram, for the roar and bustle of the city." He heard it all, and calmly winked to himself. Envy! envy! The bane of gods and men! The ever-present, never-exorcised demon that haunts all human hearts, and makes them sink at the thought of others' happiness! No matter: he will go on in spite of all; nay, he will bring down all these croakers in the early Summer and kill them, one by one, by the spectacle of his happiness! Well, he did bring them down, but happily there was no homicide. They came, admired, rejoiced, and departed. He showed them how easily and pleasantly one could slip down in undress in the early, warm summer morning, and, descending the spiral iron ladder, plunge at once into the glorious sea. He taught them how to lounge, and kill time, and loll upon garden chairs after dinner, and smoke away the long, delicious summer evenings, and play nap in the open air, and drink — sherbet? And if any landsman tired of the sea, he took him to the valley and expatiated upon cows and corn.

Ridiculed.

LXXXI

A Fragment of Eden.

They all admitted that it was glorious, delicious, a fragment of Eden very much improved, because for the sluggish Tigris here was the heaving and restless, the treacherous and magic sea. They all said how delightful it was to go to sleep with your high windows open, and the breath of the clover was borne into your bedroom with the murmurs of the enchanted sea; and how transcendently pleasant it was to sit down to one's breakfast after an appetising morning bath, and break your egg or fish whilst you glanced at the broad levels of shining sea before the window. But those evenings, those celestial evenings, when the setting sun empurpled the great cliffs opposite, and the vast mirror of the ocean modestly mirrored in pink and gold the gorgeous decorations of rock and headland; and tiny feathers of yacht-sails, or the larger canvases of fishing-boats swept as in a hollow mirror from rim to rim of the horizon; and the plash of oars came up from the sea; and the muffled voices of young girls came borne in upon the warm breeze; and the great moon came up blood-red from her sea-bath and paled into yellow glory as she mounted her steep escarpment of the sky,—ah, those celestial evenings! No wonder anxious hearts should whisper, in affected depreciation: "You have no chance of heaven, old man, after this!"

LXXXII

But he would only laugh — the happy possessor always laughs — and puff away at his cigar in happy contentment, and rail at the dusty city, and the noises and the cob-webbed cellar, and say: "My dear fellow, half the world does not know what life is."

"What a Paradise!"

And the young men applauded and said:

"Quite right. When you've made your pile, it is wise and right to step down and aside, and leave a chance for the young."

But the old men, although they hankered after such freedom and happiness, whispered to each other as they sped upwards to the city by the evening train:

"Do you know, I think old —— seemed to look wistfully after us. Wait till November! I'd bet a dozen of the best Havanas he'll be back in his office again!"

But their wives said:

"What a delightful place for children to play in for three months of Summer! What a shame that such a place should be in the hands of a wretched old bachelor!"

They had just been praising his cook, and his dinners, and his delicious tea; they had still wet on their lips:

"Oh, Mr. ——, what a Paradise!"

LXXXIII

And so the weeks sped on. The "Villa" had almost become a show place. Every visitor to the seaside should see it, and praise it. The owner was very happy.

Memory.

Sometimes, indeed, the days dragged heavily onward. It was not always sunshine. There were times when a cold, grey look was on the sea, and the cliffs in the distance across the bay looked black and threatening; and one by one, the visitors were departing for their winter homes, and the faces of the little children began to disappear. Then the terrific tyranny of old habits began to assert itself. The holiday was over; and every fibre and muscle began to clamour for old occupations, — the never-ceasing, ever-rolling routine of hours consecrated to business, and hostile to slothfulness. He argued and expostulated against the tyranny in vain. He pleaded that he had had a life of unremitting toil and anxiety; that he had a right to rest in the evening of life; that he was past labour now; and that peace and dignity were the rightful perquisites and prerogatives of age. In vain! Every faculty was clamouring for employment, protesting against the degradation of being wasted away in rusty sloth; and the imagination, spurred by the tyranny of habit, and beaten back upon itself by the frigid aspect of external nature, began to call up with tender and solemn pity the days of labour that had passed; the fifty years in the warehouse; and all the many circumstances, which, bald and vulgar and prosaic enough in reality, came now from the caves of the past under the softened and hallowed light of memory, the great transformer, and scene-shifter, and stage-manager of life.

LXXXIV

He tried to shake off the despondency, but in vain. He set himself, during these sad September days, to the task of reading and working. He laid out a programme for the winter months. He would read Shakspeare through and through. He commenced. After half an hour's conscientious labour on "Hamlet" he grew tired, and went out. Yes! there was the calm, irresponsive, Sphinx-like face of the sea, cold and grey like that battered and mutilated demon-face that stares over the desert sands, and seems to be contemplating infinity from eternity. He went back to his beautiful library, sick at heart. The early fires were burning in the grate, — of summer valedictory, of winter premonitory. The beautiful books in all manner of costly bindings gleamed from the shelves; and between them and above them, shone fair pictures, with deep, rich, gorgeous frames; and lapping their edges were fairy palms and costly evergreens, purchased in the richest nurseries in the city. What do I want? the man cried. Here is what I have been seeking after for thirty years; and lo! it is ashes in my mouth. He went out again. Not a sail flamed across the surface of the deep; not a fishing-boat made a speck across the grey monotony. And all was silent, songs of maidens, laughter of children, except with the sounds of eternity.

Despondency.

LXXXV

Loneliness.

Two hours to luncheon! He took his cane and went out. He called on the curate, asked, begged, implored him to dine with him. He had not troubled much about him while the summer visitors were flitting around. He strolled over the cliffs. A few peasants were digging out potatoes; the white sheep nibbled lazily the short grass; far beneath, the waves rolled heavily in, heaving as if in gasps of spent energy their bulk of waters against the broken boulders; the grey, solemn light lay brooding over sea and land; far away, far, far away, on the horizon line, a plume of dark vapour marked the course of a passing ship. And everywhere silence, deep terrible silence as of chaos before the turbulent voices of humanity were heard; as of a ruined world, when the voice of humanity will be heard no more, — silence, except for the wash of the waters, that would be soothing perhaps to tired and worn nerves, but that now sounded harsh and hoarse in the ears of the man who had passed out of touch with nature, because he had stepped out of his place, and refused to take his part in the vast working-sheds and laboratories of the universe.

LXXXVI

Alone!

He lunched with little appetite, and drank more than was good for him. Then he lounged along the lawn and smoked cigar after cigar. Twenty times he looked at his watch, and counted the hours to dinner. He took up "Hamlet" again; and remained for some time

brooding over the soliloquy of suicide. He flung down the book, and went out. He tried to get into conversation with a few rough, weather-tanned fishermen, who lounged up against the quay-wall. He could only elicit a monosyllable. He walked over the cliffs again; and after another two hours of misery, he returned to dinner. The good-natured curate was there. Two hours passed pleasantly by. Then a sick-call was brought, and the man was again alone, — alone with one word the curate, with no ill intention, had spoken: "How, in God's name, can you live here, after your experience of city life?" He brooded over it the whole evening through. He went to bed in a cheerless mood, and dreamt that the spirit of the Sea, the Old Man of the Sea, stood beside his bed, and kept murmuring all the night through, — "Alone!" "Alone!" "Alone!" He woke up in the dreary dawn, and heard the hoarse wash of the sea murmuring: "Alone!" "Alone!" "Alone!"

LXXXVII

Winter closes in.

And suddenly, swiftly, as if in a sudden eclipse of light and cessation of sound, the Winter closed in. There never had been so short a Summer. There had been no Autumn. The days seemed to close up, as you would close a telescope; and the nights swooped down and hung their raven wings, poised above the desolation of nature, as if they could never close and vanish again. The dreadful loneliness and idleness hung heavy on the spirit of the man. He began to loathe the face of the sea. It seemed to stare back on him from its great expanses, cold and

colourless as a corpse; and the great cliffs beyond seemed to close in like the walls of a grave of granite, so dark and gloomy, so hard and adamantine they seemed. He ceased gazing on the gloomy spectacle, and turned aside to the valley. Here, too, was all the aspect of wintry desolation — heavy fogs morning and evening, withered bracken, blanched grass which the cows ate reluctantly, and broken mangolds which his workman had scattered here and there across the field. And if he lifted his eyes, there afar off was the thin dark line of the horizon, where the cold blue light seemed to shiver under the lowering and ragged skies.

LXXXVIII

A Crisis.

To accentuate his misery, the morning paper brought news of the great city, — of its theatres, with new plays and brilliant companies; of its concerts, where world-famed artists sang for money or charity; of great balls with military bands, and long columns of the names of citizens well-known to him; and the vision of the brilliant and well-lighted city, of its long rows of gas lamps and electric lamps, of its rumbling tramcars, its wet pavements, the crowds of men and women passing to and fro, and all the human and even tender associations which are everywhere leagued with great masses of humanity, rose up before him as he sauntered in melancholy madness above the sea, or stared, with his finger in the pages of the unread book, at the coals that sparkled and burned in the grate by his lonely hearthside. It was so sad, nothing but shame and the dread of being laughed at kept him from fleeing instantly

from the uncanny place. Then one day his two servants gave notice simultaneously. It capped his climax of misery. Next evening he was in the city.

LXXXIX

Back again.

Although he had been but a few weeks absent, he felt like a stranger in a strange land. The tumult of the streets thrilled him through and through; the vibration of the tramcar seemed to penetrate his nerves, and he trembled as he rose up awkwardly from the seat, and groped his way with many a stop and stumble towards the entrance. He glided like a shamed ghost through the streets, afraid to be recognised; afraid of the *Hallo, old man!* which would mean insufferable things. He watched with the interest of a child who had come up to the city for the first time, the lighted shops, the sparkling jewellery, the long counters in warehouses, with their lines of well-groomed clerks and well-dressed girls, curious, watchful, eager; he sniffed up the odours from the restaurants as a hungry man maddened with the want of food; he could almost have hugged the newsboys, who shouted: *E-e-evning Echo-o-o!* At last he stood at the entrance to the narrow street where the offices and warehouses were, and paused. How would he enter? How face the welcome he was sure to receive; or worse still, the smiles and winks of his employés, with their deadly, yet kindly meaning: *I told you!*

XC

He did the wisest thing he could do under the circumstances. He entered the old premises dramatically. That is — he almost leaped in upon the sawdusted flags, shouted to the alarmed porters and labourers: "Clear out of my way!" pushed one or two aside, who thought an escaped maniac had got amongst them, and then took a hop, step, and jump, and landed safely in his old chair beside the grimy, ink-covered desk. When he was recognised there was a shout of laughter, and all was over. The ancient partner came in.

A Dramatic Entry.

"You 've come back?"

"Yes! Don't say, for God's sake, 'I knew it!' or 'I told you so!'"

"All right!"

"I 'll take my old place and hand you back the rhino!"

"Very good. 'T was a tight shave though. McAllister wanted to throw ten thousand into the concern to-day."

"You did n't?" with a face of alarm.

"No! I expected something. See! your name is yet on our bill-heads!"

"Thanks, old man! Now, tell me, is the old house let as yet?"

"I 'm not sure. I think not. The bills were in the window last Sunday!"

"Would you — would you — mind seeing after it for me?"

"All right. To-morrow, or perhaps Thursday —"

"Great Scott, man! Some pedler will have swallowed it up by then. Look here! 'T is only five o'clock. Run down to Henry's, will you?"

"All right. You 're in the deuce of a fright."

"No matter. And ask Henry to put in an ad. to-morrow:

"To be let or sold. Beautiful marine villa; splendid sea-view; lawn; spiral staircase to sea; beach; meadow-lands, etc., etc. But — no name! mind, no name!"

"All right! Of course, you 're coming to us until you settle?"

"May I? You 're too good. But how can I face Kate? She 'll torment the life out of me!"

"Never fear! She 's too glad to see you back. And won't the youngsters kick up the deuce of a shindy!"

"Gosh! I hope they will. Let me see. I have time to run down to the London. I must bring them something. You 'll come back, won't you, and tell us about the house?"

XCI

A Reverie.

Then he sank into a pleasant reverie, watching all the while the corpulent and pompous puncheons, and seeming to expect every moment a salvo from the vast tiers of wine bottles that seemed like tiny batteries of artillery peeping from their loopholes and embrasures. When no one was looking, he stepped softly down from his desk, and going over he actually kissed the steel ribs of an old Jack Falstaff of a whiskey cask, that had shone and glistened in its dusty cave for half a century. Then closing-time came, his partner returned, and he stepped out on the wet pavement again. For a moment he watched the crowd of people passing and repassing, a motley

crowd, made up of every element of humanity, from the young empresses who, clad in their furs and sealskins, seemed to spurn the very flags beneath their feet, to the poor, decrepit creatures who begged an alms, or the wretched and degraded humanity which gathered around the doors of saloons. Then, with a sigh and a little smile he passed on, paused for a moment, and leaned over the parapet of the bridge and saw a Milky Way of lights on quays and ships and waves, and then, humbled and happy, he accompanied his partner to his hospitable home.

XCII

A few weeks later he came in as usual one morning to business, put up his overcoat and hat, sorted, opened, and read his letters, wrote his replies, gave his little orders here and there, read the morning paper, and went out to a neighbouring restaurant at the men's dinner hour, for a modest lunch. When one o'clock had struck, and the porters and labourers trooped back from dinner, they found him asleep in his office chair. It was unusual, but they did not mind. "Old age!" they said. Later on in the day, he still slept; and then they thought he was unusually still. They shook him up and called his name. There was no answer, — none until the Great Assize. He had died at his task, — chained as he would have said with bitterness a few months ago, chained like a galley-slave to his task. But the bitterness had disappeared under the test of experience. He had died in harness, in the midst of his work; and what death could be more honourable or desirable?

And Then?

XCIII

But how did I drift into this story? I had no notion of telling it. How did it originate? Oh, yes! I was philosophising in my own senile way on the difficulty of understanding others and interpreting their thoughts, on the visions of childhood and manhood, on the discontent of general humanity at its concomitant circumstances, and its sad want of knowledge of the fact that our happiness is not to be sought in our circumstances, but in ourselves. Here our Wordsworth comes in triumphant. The poet of meditation, not of action, he draws us close to his breast, which is the breast of mother Nature, and whispers as to a sick child those little lessons of peace and wisdom nowhere else to be found but in the Book of Life. But, like some hidden nook of Paradise, where the sick and the nerveless and the world-worn fly for a while to get away from the fretfulness and racket of the world, his philosophy palls upon us, when we regain our strength, and we yearn for the bustle and the fight, — for the strenuous life that is only found amidst the crash and clangour of human interests and human hostilities.

The Secret of Happiness.

XCIV

Shall we take Browning's verdict on Wordsworth?

"All I can affirm is that I treasure as precious every poem written during about the first twenty years of the poet's life; after these, the solution grows weaker, the crystals gleam more rarely, and the assiduous stirring up of the mixture is too apparent and obtrusive."

Browning on Wordsworth.

Or, Professor Jowett's? —

"His merits are not exaggerated. At his best, he is so extraordinarily good. But the lyrical poems, 'We are Seven,' 'Lesson to Fathers,' 'Star-Gazers' are many of them poor. 'Lucy Gray' and 'The Pet Lamb' better; but the subject is inadequate, too ordinary. I doubt whether nature can really supply all the comfort which he supposes. The constant reflection on nature is forced, like the constant thought about art. You cannot constantly be watching clouds, or listening to winds, or catching the songs of birds. For a moment they give us repose. But the animal enjoyment of the air and light has a great deal to do with the refreshment of our spirits."

XCV

A World-Soul.

There is a great deal of sense and truth in these observations. And Wordsworth's popularity in our time (confined exclusively to the thoughtful and middle-aged) is due to the fact that his poetry is restful — for a while. It is a sedative for tired brains and nerves. He sets you down on a mountain side, or by a brook, or beneath a tree, and smooths out the wrinkles of care, and soothes you by the peace, unbroken save by the murmur of the brook, or the music of the wind. Readers go to him for the same reason that world-workers, tired from the burden of toil and responsibility, seek the Alps and solitude, or the sea-beach for its quiet. But as the Professor says, a healthy mind soon grows tired of all this, and yearns for the bustle and action of life again. Of course, there is a deeper reason for the poet's popularity with such souls as Matthew Arnold or George Eliot, namely, that he supplies a natural for a supernatural religion. This is a species

of Buddhism, a belief in a *World-Soul*, animating all things, but only smitten into consciousness when actually incorporated with matter. This Wordsworth has expressed and embodied in many poems, but chiefly in the second stanza in the "Ode on Intimations of Immortality."

XCVI

This is the *Erd-Geist* of Goethe that burst upon the terrified eye of Faust, and explained first its own mission in the memorable and oft-quoted lines commencing: The Erd-Geist of Goethe.

"In Lebensfluthen, im Thatensturm,"

and ending with the tremendous words:

"So Schaff' ich am sausenden Webstuhl der Zeit
Und wirke der Gottheit lebendiges Kleid."

I do not know whether the observation has been made by others, but it seems certain to me that Wordsworth must have borrowed a great deal of his philosophy, and not a few of his best lines, from the First Part of *Faust*. At least I think I can trace a resemblance in thought and diction between many of his most beautiful and lofty reflections and similar ideas in *Faust*. For example:

"Poet. — Give me, oh! give me back the days
When I — I too — I was young,
And felt as they now feel, each coming hour,
New consciousness of power,
Oh, happy, happy time, above all praise.
Then thoughts on thoughts, and crowding fancies sprung
And found a language in unbidden lays,
Unintermitted streams from fountains ever flowing.

Then as I wandered free
In every field, for me
Its thousand flowers were blowing!
A veil through which I did not see,
A thin veil o'er the world was thrown,
In every bud a mystery,
Magic in everything unknown,
The field, the grove, the air was haunted,
And all that age has disenchanted."

and this, which also resembles Shelley:

"FAUST. — The courses of the stars to thee
No longer are a mystery;
The thoughts of Nature thou canst seek,
As spirits with their brothers speak,
It is, it is the planet hour
Of thy own being."

or the famous characters in the sign of Macrocosmos:

"The Worlde of Spirits no clouds conceale,
Man's eye is dim, it cannot see;
Man's heart is dead, it cannot feele,
Thou, who wouldst know the things that be,
The Heart of Earth in the sunrise red,
Bathe, till its stains of Earth are fled."

One quotation more, so like Wordsworth that one could almost believe it was written by him:

"Oh! once in boyhood's happy time, Heaven's love
Showered down upon me with mysterious kiss
Hallowing the stillness of the Sabbath-Day!
Feelings resistless, incommunicable,
Yearnings for something that I knew not of,
Deep meanings in the full tones of the bells,
Mingled — a prayer was burning ecstasy —
Drove me a wanderer through the fields and woods;
Then tears ran hot and fast — then was the birth
Of a new life, and a new world for me!"

And this last:

"FAUST (*alone*).—Yes, lofty Spirit, thou hast given me all,
All that I asked of thee, and not in vain,
In unconsuming fire revealed, hast thou
Been with me, manifesting gloriously
Thy Presence — thou hast looked on me with love.
— Hast given me the empire o'er majestic Nature;
Power to enjoy and feel! 'T was not alone
The stranger's short, permitted privilege
Of momentary wonder that thou gavest.
No, thou hast given me into her deep breast
As into a friend's most sacred heart to look.
Hast brought me to the tribes of living things,
Thus teaching me to recognise and love
My brothers in still grove, or air, or stream.
And when in the wide wood the tempest raves
And shrieks, and rends the giant pines, uproots,
Disbranches, and with mad'ning grasp uplifting
Flings them to earth, and from the hollow hill
Dull moaning thunders echo their descent;
Then dost thou lead me to the safe retreat
Of some low cavern, there exhibiting
To my awed soul its own mysterious nature!
Of my own heart the depths miraculous!
Its secret inward being all exposed!
And when before my eye the pure moon walks
High over head, diffusing a soft light,
Then from the rocks, and over the damp wood
The pale, bright shadows of the ancient times
Before me seem to move, and mitigate
The too severe delight of earnest thought!"

XCVII

Plagiarism.

It is quite true that Wordsworth, Christian man as he was, flung "Wilhelm Meister" across the room in a fit of honest and virtuous indignation; and it is also true that, on the suggestions of Emerson, he took up the

study of the master-mind of Germany again. And I cannot think I am mistaken in saying that there is every probability that he took the germs of his philosophy from that great philosophical poem, from which I have quoted, and the First Part of which saw the light in 1808. This means no detraction from Wordsworth's honour, no depreciation of his genius. It is now admitted that there is and can be no such thing as plagiarism in great poets. Genius has a right to absorb everything and transmute it into its own substance and form. No one complains that every play that passes under the hallowed name of Shakspeare had been actually presented on the boards of London theatres long before the immortal "link-boy" came up from Stratford-on-Avon. And there are very few if any of our great singers who can be called original. If Coleridge purloined from Schelling, Wordsworth might have adapted from "Faust"; and no one has a right to object.

XCVIII

Naturalism.

But it confirms the opinion that there is a certain naturalism in Wordsworth, and a certain seeking after repose, which would be surprising in such an excellent Christian were he not imbued, like his great compeer, with certain forms and doctrines of German transcendentalism. Coleridge must have influenced Wordsworth. It was inevitable. And he must have indoctrinated him in all those mysteries which then passed as religious from the Rhine to the Oder. And so, as Marcus Aurelius's "Meditations" is the "Gospel for those who do not believe," Words-

worth's nature and its voices are a religion for those who will not accept Christianity. And the repose which he finds under the wings of the *Erd-Geist* in mountain, vale, and river, has more resemblance to the *Nirvana* of the East than to the "warfare" and eternal struggle of the spirit which, in the Pauline theology, are the daily and hourly occupation of the Christian. But that Wordsworth's poetry is an opiate, and a useful opiate to tired and irritable nerves, especially those of genius, is incontestable; and hence his poetry will always be a manual in the hands of brain-workers, or the weary seekers after the solution of problems that are insoluble.

XCIX

In this connection a few lines from Heinrich Heine may be appositely quoted. Speaking of Goethe, with his cold, sterile creations, and his unwholesome doctrine, so warmly and widely revived in our days of "Art for Art's sake alone," Heine writes: Heine on Goethe.

"It is true that Goethe also depicted a few of the great struggles of freedom, but he portrayed them as an artist. Christian zeal was odious to him, and he turned from it; and the enthusiasm for philosophy, which is characteristic of our epoch, he either could not understand, or purposely avoided understanding, for fear of ruffling his customary tranquillity of mind. In his hands the living spirit became dead matter, and he invested it with a lovely and pleasing form. . . . The example of the master misled the disciples, and there arose in Germany that literary epoch, which I once designated as the 'art period,' and which, as I then showed, had a most disastrous influence on the political

development of the German people. At the same time I by no means deny the intrinsic worth of the Goethean masterpieces. They adorn our beloved fatherland just as beautiful statues embellish a garden; but they are only statues after all. One may fall in love with them, but they are barren. Goethe's poems do not, like Schiller's, beget deeds. Deeds are the offspring of words; but Goethe's pretty words are childless. That is the curse of all that has originated in mere art."

C

Vanished.

Lo! as I write, the Summer has vanished. The days are drawing in with a swiftness and suddenness that are startling. How little sunshine there is in human lives! That flushed and ardent maiden, who came to us after her gentle sister of the Spring, seems to have simply looked in at us in these cold northern climes; and then, as if she had discharged a disagreeable duty, rushed back to her own native tropics again. And still, transient as are her visits here, strange to say, but little use is made of them. Hard-worked men, who should have rushed away pell-mell from stifling cities, from their cobwebbed offices and dingy dungeons, to enjoy the long, sweet, warm days by the sea, and the still sweeter evenings and twilights that stretch on to midnight, put off their holidays till the days and nights are equal in September, and the Winter is rushing in, jangling his fetters and manacles of frost. How explain it? I suppose there is only one way, namely, that what man seeks, in the long run, is not, *pace* Wordsworth and Matthew Arnold, sea, nor sky, nor plain, nor dumb, cold nature at all, but the eternally interesting face of his fellow-man, even when seen through a cloud of

tobacco-smoke across the green baize of a billiard-table in some primitive seaside hotel, or the thick atmosphere of a continental train anywhere from Calais to Rome.

CI

A Garden Dialogue.

As I closed these random reflections on things in general, I sat in my garden in the twilight of a long summer evening. The sun had set, and the faint light was wavering between day and night. A huge bat was flying round and round in circles that seemed to be grooved for him in the air. Over my head a tiny spider hung down on a single thread. There was an odour of jasmine and mignonette in the warm air. Close to my head was a thick clump of laurel; and one white tea-rose hung her beautiful petals against it as if for support. On the rim of one fair petal was a brown line, the first symptom and harbinger of decay. The air was so still I could hear her say:

"Why am I sad?" you ask. "Because in a few weeks, a few days, I shall be dead, — buried there beneath the brown earth, whilst you are a perennial, an immortal!"

"And is death an evil, and is immortality on earth a boon?" asked the spirit of the laurel.

"Certainly," said the rose. "Even my short life beneath the blue sky, kissed by the winds, fanned by the wings of birds, has been supremely happy."

"True, but see what is before me!" said the spirit of the laurel. "I have no Summer like you, because I am not a flower. But I have a Winter before me, and many, many Winters. Think of

eight hours of pallid sunshine, and sixteen hours of darkness deep as the pit; think of the rough winds that tear through me, the frosts that bite me, the snows that lean their icy burden on me, the lightnings that blast me, the men who shear and clip every little tiny shoot I put forth, until now, in my old age, I am childless and flowerless as the grave. Oh, my little sister, grieve not. You have been loved. That atones for death. Do not covet an immortality of loveless desolation!"

And the rose said:

"Yea. Be it so. Only let me lean against thee unto the last."

The University Press, Cambridge, U. S. A.

DATE DI

JUL. 1 1 1983

STORAGE

Sheehan, Canon
Parerga

PR
5377
S5

47800